

CAIRO (AFP) — Preachers in around 70 per cent of Egypt's 66,000 mosques are government approved in line with a new law tightening state control of religious worship, the minister of Islamic affairs said Saturday. Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzuq said 15,000 permits had been granted since the law was passed late last year, while another 30,000 preachers had been officially trained at the Al Azhar organisation, the country's highest Sunni Islamic authority. The new law is seen as an attempt by the government to prevent Muslim fundamentalists from spreading their ideas. It also plans to bring all mosques under direct state control by the end of the decade. Muslim militants launched a violent campaign to overthrow the government in 1992.

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TUNIS (R) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Saturday vowed support to a planned Middle East and North Africa economic summit in November to be attended by Israel despite criticism from several Arab countries. "By attending, we will be able to promote our rights particularly on the economic, water and refugee issues," Dr. Majali told a press conference at the end of a three-day visit to Tunisia. Qatar plans to hold the summit, part of the Middle East peace multilateral talks, but the move was criticised by several Arab countries who promote the boycott because of the freeze in Israeli-PNA peacemaking following Israel's groundbreaking in March on a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem. Syria, Egypt and six Gulf Arab states meeting in the Syrian resort of Latakia on Thursday made an indirect criticism of Qatar's plan to hold the summit.

KFAR DROM (AFP) — An Israeli soldier fired at Palestinian police early Saturday at a checkpoint near the Kfar Drom Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian official said. The two security forces met to discuss the incident, after which the Israeli army apologized and said the soldier would be arrested, said the Palestinian official who works with a liaison committee between the sides. The Israeli army did not immediately comment on the shooting. The incident followed the shooting of two Palestinians earlier in the week when Israelis from the Morag settlement in the southern Gaza Strip attacked Palestinian protesters. The two Palestinians, who were protesting a new perimeter fence built around the small settlement, were wounded.

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq strongly condemned Turkey over its decision to extend the mandate of the U.S.-led force patrolling an air exclusion zone over northern Iraq, newspapers reported on Saturday. A foreign ministry spokesman, quoted by the press, said: "The continuation of the Turkish invasion of northern Iraq and the renewal of the allied surveillance force mandate shows how far Turkish officials will go to undermine Iraq." The spokesman accused Turkey of "non-respect for U.N. resolutions and the rules of good neighbourliness." The Turkish parliament on Thursday renewed for six months the mandate of the U.S. and British force based in Incirlik in southern Turkey and tasked with protecting Kurds in northern Iraq from air attack by President Saddam Hussein's forces. The force called "Northern Watch" was created in December 1996 to replace an earlier U.S.-French-British operation known as "Provide Comfort" set up after the 1991 Gulf war to protect the Kurds. France decided in December not to take part in the new mission, arguing that with no ground aspect it no longer had a humanitarian role.

HEBRON (R) — Israeli soldiers shot and wounded at least two Palestinians in clashes that erupted in Hebron on Saturday after anti-Muslim hate posters were glued to Arab shops in the divided West Bank city, witnesses said.

Dozens of protesters took the streets after Palestinian shopkeepers found posters tarnishing the image of the Prophet Mohammad on about 20 storefronts near a Jewish settlement enclave.

"The army of Mohammad will return," rock-throwing Arab demonstrators shouted.

At least two Palestinians were hit by rubber-coated metal bullets fired by Israeli troops and one was taken to hospital with a head wound, Arab witnesses said.

An Israeli army spokeswoman said she had no information about Palestinians wounded.

"During the disturbances, rocks were thrown at Israeli soldiers but none were hurt



OCCUPIED JERUSALEM
(AFP) — Israeli border police broke up a demonstration Saturday of female relatives of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails as they marched in Arab east Jerusalem.

Holding pictures of their sons and brothers, a dozen women walked through Arab east Jerusalem to the edge of the Old City where some 20 police barred their path.

The women carried signs reading "Where is the peace of the graves without our prisoners?" and "No more mothers without sons."

"All we want is our sons. We just want our prisoners returned. That's why we came out today," said Widad Kurdi, whose son Ehab has been held in an Israeli prison since 1984 after being sentenced to life in prison.

Witnesses said one youth threw a stone after the protest but it ended peacefully and the demonstrators dispersed after their march was blocked by the police.

The march was organised by the Prisoners' Club, a prisoners' rights group.

Under the Oslo peace accords between Israel and the Palestinians, Israel is slated to release thousands of Palestinian prisoners.

Israel last released prisoners in February, when 30 women detainees were granted amnesty.

Some 3,500 Palestinian prisoners remain in Israeli jails.

JERICHO (AFP) — The Palestinian leadership called for a general strike in Arab east Jerusalem to be held on Sunday to protest Israeli settlement building in the city, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

The leadership, including President Yasser Arafat called on "all merchants and public in Arab east Jerusalem to adhere to the general strike," in a statement published by Wafa on Saturday.

The strike "comes in response to [Israel's] settlement drive which aims to empty the city of all Palestinians and to isolate it from its Palestinian surroundings by encompassing it with a settlement belt," it said.

The statement follows a call by the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce in Arab east Jerusalem for a general strike Sunday to protest raids by Israeli tax authorities against Palestinian merchants in Jerusalem's eastern sector.

Merchants accuse municipal authorities of overtaxing them by hundreds of thousands of dol-

lars in order to force them into bankruptcy and to move out of the city.

Palestinians have pulled out of peace negotiations over Israel's construction of a new Jewish settlement on the southern edge of Arab east Jerusalem at Jabal Abu Ghneim.

The Palestinian leadership, including the self-rule cabinet and the central committee of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), which held their weekly meeting Friday night in the West Bank city of Jericho, repeated demands "that Israel call a stop to the building."

"There can be no escape from the current crisis in the peace process except by a halt in settlements in Arab east Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian areas," it said.

"Israel's toying with Arab east Jerusalem moves Palestinian anger and outrage among large sectors of the Arab, Islamic and Christian public, threatening security and stability not only in Palestine but in the whole region," it said.

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi foreign minister, Mohammad Said Sahaf, has denied that Baghdad is still holding Kuwaiti prisoners of war and attacked a resolution on the issue by eight Arab neighbours.

"To satisfy the Americans, these countries have made false accusations against Iraq, reproaching it for continuing to provoke Kuwait, failing to implement U.N. resolutions and not settling the issue of (Kuwaiti) prisoners," Mr. Sahaf said in remarks reported by the Iraqi media on Saturday.

After a two-day meeting in Syria this week, eight signatories to the Damascus Declaration — Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf states — issued a statement urging Iraq to implement U.N. resolutions-passed after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990, particularly regarding Kuwaiti prisoners.

"Iraq is not detaining any Kuwaiti prisoners of war and is actively working to

settle the issue of missing Kuwaitis, Iraqis and other nationalities," Mr. Sahaf said.

"Iraq has met its commitments and is waiting for the Security Council to fulfil its own commitments," he added.

Kuwait claims Iraq has not accounted for about 600 prisoners and missing persons since the seven-month Iraqi occupation that ended in February 1991.

Mr. Sahaf also said Iraq was "the victim of provocation by British and American planes which have been flying over its territory since 1991," referring to air patrols over northern Iraq set up after the Gulf war to protect the Kurds.

The Damascus Declaration was signed by Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf nations — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates — after the Gulf war to liberate Kuwait.

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government announced Saturday that proceeds from selling its equity in public shareholding and private companies will be placed in a special fund.

Speaking to reporters following a Cabinet session, Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs Jawad Anani explained that the money will either be deposited at the Treasury or invested in shares and bonds.

Only interest would be drawn to finance capital projects to benefit low-income families, the minister said. Interest could be also used to cover losses at companies where the government still has equity.

The original proceeds and any other additional proceeds from equity sales will remain accessible and held in accounts for "future generations," the minister emphasised.

"This is a very important decision which will be issued soon in the form of a law that would regulate the nature of the fund, its resources and the way the interest would be used," Dr. Anani said.

The minister stressed that international donors, especially the World Bank and International Monetary

CAIRO (R) — A senior Egyptian official said in remarks published on Saturday that a Middle Eastern common market including Israel would not be established even if Israel finalises peace accords with its Arab neighbours.

Assistant Foreign Minister Raouf Saad told the government-owned Al-Ahram newspaper that Israel's strong economy and not its politics prevented the common market, an idea born of earlier progress in the Middle East peace process, from seeing the light.

"There is no scope for talking about Middle Eastern economic cooperation which includes Israel. Even if there is peace, this issue is not on the agenda," Mr. Saad said.

ISTANBUL (R) — Prime Minister-designate Mesut Yilmaz's hope of winning a confidence vote for his secularist coalition has been boosted by resignations from Turkey's Islamist-led government parties.

"Confidence vote has been secured" the mass-circulation *Hurriyet* headlined after five deputies quit the ruling Islamist-led coalition on Friday.

Two more MPs from deputy prime minister, Tansu Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) resigned on Saturday, reducing the Islamists and their allies to 272 MPs on a paper. This compares with 274 deputies who are likely to support Motherland Party (Anap) leader Mr. Yilmaz's left-right coalition.

Haluk Muftuler, who abandoned the DYP earlier this week, and Ali Duyar,

resigned on Saturday, and the Motherland, a Catholic news agency, said Ciller claimed that Yilmaz would fail to get a vote of confidence from the assembly. "This government cannot win a vote of confidence. It is not possible to maintain even if it gets a confidence vote," Ms. Ciller told reporters hours after the resignations. Political analysts say the MPs are expected to vote on the resignation wave as Yilmaz intensified his efforts to replace caretaker prime minister Necmettin Erbakan, who resigned after a stormy year as moderate Turkey's first Islamist premier.

Democratic Turkey Party (DTP), met on Saturday to draw up the new government's programme.

Mural Busegicoglu, a senior Anap deputy, said the commission would conclude the programme by Tuesday. Mr. Yilmaz is expected to present the new cabinet list to President Suleyman Demirel next week.

The confidence vote is due within two weeks.

The Motherland now has 132 seats in the 550-member assembly. Mr. Yilmaz's possible coalition partners DSP controls 67 and DTP 11 seats. The 49-member left-wing Republican People's Party has pledged support for Mr. Yilmaz but said it would not take part in his government.

Anap sources say 15 of

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued on page 3)

Turkish soldiers kill 17 Kurds Military vehicle hits mine

MARDIN (Agencies) — Nine soldiers were killed when their vehicle hit a mine laid by Kurdish rebels near this southeastern city on Saturday, the Anatolia News Agency said.

One village guard, helping the troops in their fight against autonomy-seeking Kurdish rebels, was also killed in the explosion near the town of Midyat, it said.

The rebels often plant mines on roads used by Turkish military patrols in Turkey's southeast.

The incident came two

days after the military declared victory in a six-week operation in northern Iraq against the rebels.

The military claimed to have killed some 3,000 rebels in northern Iraq, while losing 113 troops, but the rebels disputed the figures.

Some 28,000 people have died since the rebels launched a guerrilla war for autonomy in Turkey's southeast in 1984.

Meanwhile, Turkish troops killed 17 Kurdish guerrillas on Saturday in

southeastern Turkey, the semi-official Anatolian News Agency said.

It said eight members of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) were shot dead in an operation, launched after nine Turkish soldiers and a state-paid village guard were killed by a land mine, planted by rebels, in the southeastern town of Midyat.

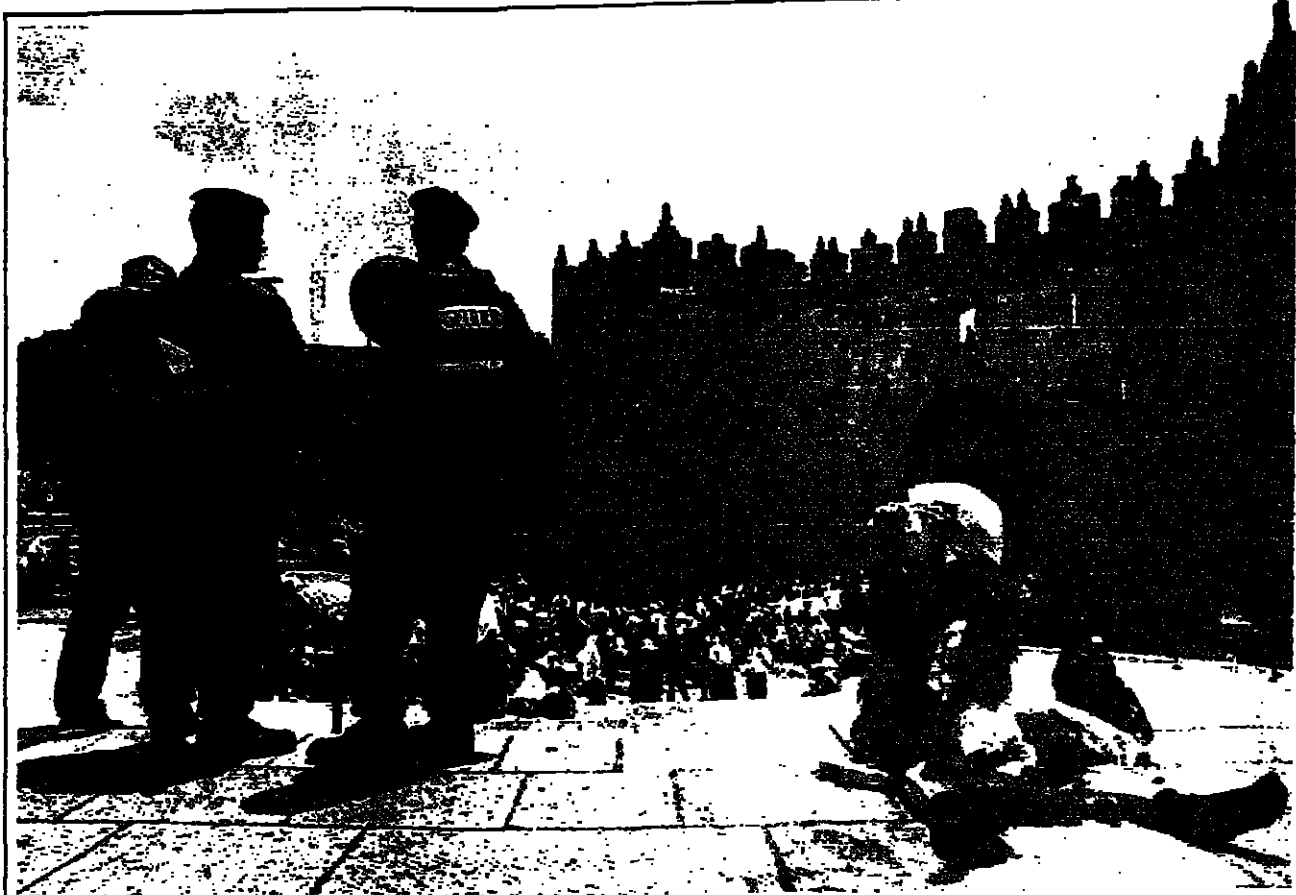
The soldiers and the guard were killed when their military patrol vehicle hit the land mine late on Friday.

The agency said two PKK members surrendered during the clash.

Nine other PKK guerrillas have been killed in other clashes in the southeastern towns of Tatvan, Guroymak, Besiri, Sason, Ozalp and Kulp.

The agency did not say when the clashes took place.

The PKK has been fighting for autonomy or independence in the region since 1984. More than 24,000 people have been killed since then.



A Palestinian woman beggar on Friday sits with her child at the stairs to the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City where Israeli security has been stepped up following the arrest of a young Palestinian who was planning a suicide bombing here. The man was arrested by the Palestinian security forces after a tip from the Israeli police (AFP Photo)

Omani leader visits Egypt

SHARM AL SHEIKH (AFP) — President Hosni Mubarak met Saturday with visiting Omani leader Sultan Qaboos in the Red Sea resort of Sharm Al Sheikh to discuss the crisis in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Mr. Mubarak was to brief the sultan on Egyptian mediation efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and to push the Arab position in dealings with Israel, state television said.

"Security in the Gulf, an Arab common market and strengthening bilateral economic ties" would also be on the agenda, the television said.

According to Egyptian official figures, trade between Egypt and Oman stood at \$3 million in 1995, with the bulk accounted for by Egyptian exports. The Gulf state of Oman and Somalia were the only Arab League members not to break diplomatic ties with Egypt when it signed peace with Israel in 1979.

Fateh leadership convenes to discuss peace deadlock

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat held an emergency meeting on Saturday with the main assembly of his Fateh faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to discuss the three-month halt in the peace process, an official said.

The 150-member Fateh Revolutionary Council convened to examine "the latest developments in the

continuing freeze in the peace process due to Israel's settlement activities," said the Palestinian official, who asked not to be named.

The meeting, which continues on Sunday, will also deal with Egypt's effort to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians to bring an end to the crisis, he said.

Israeli-Palestinian talks have been suspended since March after Israel went

ahead with a plan to build a new Jewish settlement in occupied east Jerusalem.

Both Israel and Palestinian officials have warned of an outbreak of violence if the peace process does not resume. The Palestinians refuse to return to negotiations unless Israel calls a halt to settlement building in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel has rejected the condition.

Syria, Indonesia sign accords to boost cooperation, investments

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria and Indonesia signed accords to protect investments and avoid double taxation during a visit by Prime Minister Mahmud Zobi to Jakarta, the official press reported here Saturday.

Other agreements establishing tourism, cultural and press cooperation were also signed, the daily Al Thawra said.

Mr. Zobi, who arrived in Indonesia with his ministers of finance, trade and foreign affairs on Thursday, met President Suharto on Friday.

Indonesian State Secretary Mardiono said afterwards that Jakarta planned to send banking officials to Syria in efforts to strengthen economic and trade ties between the two Muslim

countries.

President Suharto told Mr. Zobi he backed Arab demands for the return of occupied land from Israel and had no plans to establish diplomatic ties with Israel. Mr. Mardiono added.

Mr. Zobi is due to return to Syria on Sunday after spending a day in Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

Saudi crown prince leaves for Damascus for talks with Assad

BEIRUT (AP) — Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia ended a three-day trip and headed to Syria Saturday for talks with Syria's president on the stalled Middle East peace process.

Crown Prince Abdullah, heading a 162-member delegation, was seen off at the border crossing by Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and several of his cabinet ministers.

In Damascus, he will meet with President Hafez Assad. During his stay in Beirut, Prince Abdullah backed Lebanon's diplomatic efforts to end Israel's occupation of south Lebanon, and predicted a "rosy future" for the country as it recovers from a devastating civil war.

He was the first senior Saudi official to visit Lebanon since the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 between Muslim and Christian factions. It ended in 1990 with an accord sponsored by Saudi Arabia.

Since then, the oil-rich kingdom has given Lebanon at least \$390 million in economic aid and a grant of \$25 million. In addition, the Saudi-based Islamic Development Bank gave a \$18 million loan this year to build a new campus for the state-run Lebanese University.

Prince Abdullah is said to have discussed Saudi Arabia's participation in Lebanon's multimillion dollar reconstruction plan with Mr. Hariri and President Elias Hrawi.

Rights group calls on Iran to release journalist

DUBAI (R) — A U.S.-based human rights group urged Iran to release a newspaper editor arrested in April unless evidence was produced in a fair trial to support espionage charges against him.

"We fear that the charges may have been brought against Mr. Sarkuhi to punish him for his activities as a writer and to intimidate other independent-minded writers in Iran," Human Rights Watch wrote in an open letter to the head of Iran's judiciary, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi.

The copy of the letter received by Reuters on Saturday was dated June 26.

Faraj Sarkuhi, editor of the

monthly Adineh (Friday), was arrested in April for trying to leave the country illegally.

He had alleged in a letter smuggled out of Iran that he was held for six weeks and tortured by the Iranian secret service in Tehran late last year to force him to confess to spying to Germany.

Mr. Sarkuhi had been charged with espionage and would be tried soon.

Human rights and press freedom groups have since said that the trial had begun and that Mr. Sarkuhi was being deprived of legal representation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Musa heads for Hong Kong

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa left for Hong Kong on Saturday to take part in ceremonies marking its handover to China. Mr. Musa, who said Egypt and Saudi Arabia were the only Arab countries to have been invited to Monday's ceremonies, told reporters he would hold talks with Chinese and other officials there on "ways to save the Middle East peace process."

5 Sudanese die of alcohol poisoning

QENA (R) — Five Sudanese men died in the Egyptian Red Sea town of Quseir after drinking a homemade alcoholic cocktail, southern security sources said on Saturday. They said the men, whose ages ranged from 30 to 35 years, died in hospital from alcohol poisoning. Alcohol poisoning is not uncommon in Egypt where some people specialise in refilling bottles of international or local brands with homemade brews and selling them as the original article.

Germany gives Turkish objector asylum

BERLIN (AFP) — Germany has granted political asylum to a Turkish conscientious objector for the first time, a German anti-conscription organisation announced Friday. Mustafa Unalan had stressed in his request for asylum that men who refuse compulsory military service in Turkey can be jailed for up to 20 years. The group campaign against obligatory military service described Bonn's decision as a condemnation of Turkey, which does not recognise the right of conscientious objection.

TEL AVIV (R) — Hawking shoes at a street-side stand may not look like a high-tech job, but salesman Sami Joabeh insists he can't get by without his cellular phone.

"I am a businessman. I am selling slippers, so I must always keep in touch with my factories. They call me a lot, maybe three or four times a day," he said.

The number of cellular phones in Israel has soared to 1.4 million from 100,000 in just two-and-a-half years. One in five Israelis, from garbage collectors to top executives, have cell phones, and the number is rising.

"We have more than 1,000 new customers every day," said spokesman Ilan Bahar of Cellcom, which provides half of the country's cellular phone lines.

Israelis spend about 500 minutes a month on the phone — more than citizens of any other country. And Israel has the fourth highest phone-to-person ratio in

Cellular phone craze hits Israelis

the world, according to the Ministry of Communications.

"It's the character of the country," Mr. Bahar said. "Like keys for a car, they take (mobile phones) everywhere they go — to the movie theatre, to the bank. Nobody knows why."

Popular among Palestinians, the craze has hit Palestinian areas just as hard.

"We don't have many lines here in Palestine. It's a problem with the (Palestinian) National Authority. The only solution for us is cellular phones," said Tawil Izz, whose Ramallah store sells mobile phones.

Palestinians took over telephone services in self-rule areas five months ago, and quickly installed 88,000 lines. But that hasn't been nearly enough,

according to Mohammad Ali, director general of the Palestine Telecommunications Co. About 150,000 Palestinians are still waiting.

"I hope that the new corporation will give many new lines to the people. (But) people here like to work with a cellular phone. I see it every day in the streets in Ramallah," Mr. Izz said.

One of the reasons for the popularity of mobile phones is the relatively low cost of air time. A basic phone costs about \$300, and customers at Israel's two cellular phone companies, Pelephone and Cellcom, pay between 11 and 22 cents a minute for air time in addition to monthly fees.

A regular phone line costs about \$200 to install in addition to the cost of the telephone.

Israelis say they still couldn't live without their Pelephones, Hebrew for "wonder phones."

"Security for us is number one. So if your kids are going out on a date, most of the time we feel most secure when our son or daughter is holding a cell phone," Mr. Bahar said.

"When he's older and he's gone to the army, we'd prefer he had a phone to call so he doesn't have to waste time looking for a pay phone," he said.

However, the army banned troops from making on-duty cellular phone calls two years ago and sentenced an air force soldier to four days' detention for phoning while guarding his base.

That followed reports that Israeli soldiers in south Lebanon had used their mobile phones to

order pizza for midnight delivery to the border.

But the ban hasn't stopped troops from calling on their off hours.

"We call friends, Mom, Daddy, Grandpa," said 20-year-old soldier Ran Chah, while waiting for a bus with some friends.

"Grandpa" asked one of his army buddies.

"Sure, why not," he said, grinning.

In 1994, Israel also prohibited motorists from talking while driving, and more than doubled the fine to \$220 two years later. Despite that, police issue more than 2,000 fines every month.

In April, Israel's national police chief fined himself for talking on the road after other motorists called a radio station to complain.

"It's like a hobby in Israel," said Shlomi Bayssa, a 24-year-old furniture salesman. "Today, whoever does not have this should get a ticket."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

3:30 Holy Koran
3:40 French Programmes
4:05 America's Funniest People
4:30 Energy Express
5:15 American Chart Show
6:00 French Programmes
7:00 News in French
7:30 News Headline
7:35 Fresh Prince of Belair
8:00 Cinema Cinema Cinema
8:30 The Churchills
9:10 Renegade
10:00 News in English
10:30 One West Walkie
11:15 Tennis
12:05 Final America Cup

PRAYER TIMES

03:53 Fajr
05:28 (Sunrise) Duha
12:39 Dhuhr
16:19 'Asr
19:50 Maghreb
21:25 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652836.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.
775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 5516245

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department
of Meteorology
It will be fair with temperatures

around their seasonal average. In
Agaba it will be hot, dusty and
seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 17/31
Agaba 24/38
Deserts 16/34
Jordan Valley 24/38

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 30, Agaba 38 Humidity
readings: Amman 37 per cent,
Agaba 24 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh 827195
Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq 788285
Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197
Dr. Afif Shukri 898863
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shreissani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Rashed Atallah 994424
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akileh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musheer Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 09986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02755555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02722275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 027247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 039314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(08)53200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00 Bangkok, Berlin (RJ)

07:20 London (BA)
07:20 Tel Aviv (LY)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Larnaca (RJ)
11:00 Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00 Tunis (RJ)
12:15 Ankara, Istanbul (RJ)
12:15 Vienna (RJ)
12:30 Rome (RJ)
12:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:20 Athens (RJ)
13:25 London (RJ)
21:00 New Delhi (RJ)
21:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:20 Beirut (RJ)
21:25 Jeddah (RJ)
21:40 Damascus (RJ)
22:25 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:40 Bangkok (RJ)
23:00 Dubai (RJ)
23:45 Sanaa (RJ)
01:50 Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (RJ)
Other Flights
13:30 Jeddah (SV)
13:30 Sanaa (TY)
14:25 Doha (GF)
16:35 Moscow (SU)
22:25 Cairo (MS)
00:45 Amsterdam (KL)
02:00 Cairo (MS)
07:00 Beirut (MS)
07:55 London (BA)
08:15 Tel Aviv (LY)

'Exemplary management key to agro-projects'

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha Saturday asserted that exemplary management of agricultural projects is based on the effective use of available resources at low cost.

Addressing the opening session of a six-day training course regarding agricultural projects, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture in conjunction with the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD), Mr. Khreisha reaffirmed the importance of "securing well-trained cadres to achieve aspired goals and ensure the success of agricultural projects."

Agricultural projects in the Arab World face many obstacles, the first of which is the provision of effective management, he said.

"Thus we should study and analyse any and all obstacles in order to avoid them in the future," the minister added.

"Jordan has paid due



Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha Saturday addresses the opening session of a six-day training course regarding agricultural projects, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture in conjunction with the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD) (Petra photo)

attention to developing agricultural projects since the 1960s," he explained. "In the 1980s, the ministry established a specialised directorate whose duties

are to prepare plans for multi-purpose projects and supervise them."

President of AOAD Yahya Bakour described these training courses as

helping to develop human resources in the Arab World.

Participating in these sessions are 25 Arab agronomists.

'Arab World must share costs of anti-drug forces'

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Council of Islamic Organisations and Societies in Jordan (CIOSJ) Saturday issued a statement urging those Arab countries which surround Jordan to share in the costs of Jordan's protracted fight against drug traffickers.

The council also suggested that awards be bestowed upon Jordanian officials from the Anti-Narcotics Department in order that they be encouraged to pursue their drug prevention campaign.

Last week, the Anti-Narcotics Department announced that it had thwarted the largest ever narcotics smuggling attempt in both Jordan and the Arab World, confiscating a stash of heroin and opium with an estimated street value of JD 6 million. Anti-Narcotics Department Director Colonel Nazih Shreideh maintained that a total of 31 kilograms of heroin and 16 kilograms of opium were found in the possession of five foreigners last Saturday.

The CIOSJ maintained that it studied the report covering the drug bust and believes that the government has the right to request financial assistance from neighbouring Arab countries as its forces are providing protection thereto.

According to Col. Shreideh, the drug haul, found secreted in a hidden vehicle compartment, was transported from Turkey via Syria and directed to another Arab country by a group of smugglers representing an "international mafia" with vast experience in drug trafficking methods.

Other governments ought to contribute to the cost of stymieing such illicit operations as they are directed against the Arab World at large, the statement said.

Firm to prospect for oil in Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — Anadarko, one of several U.S. oil firms which signed contracts to prospect for oil in Jordan last year, Saturday concluded an agreement with the National Oil Company to borrow rigs and staff in order to commence drilling operations in the northeast of the country.

The oil firm will commence exploration in the region of Safawi and is slated to spend \$5 million in the first 3.5 years of its operations and a total of \$20 million over an eight-year period.

Last year's agreement stipulated that Anadarko would conduct exploration works over 17,000 square kilometres and geological and geophysical studies as well as seismological surveys while drilling a minimum of six wells over eight years.

According to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the agreement with Anadarko on oil and gas production details that the Jordanian government will receive 62.5 per cent of the total amount of oil produced and 60 per cent of gas produced, while Anadarko will be entitled to 37.5 and 40 per cent respectively.

Anadarko has also pledged to cooperate with the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) and offer a grant of \$1 million as a bonus to Jordan upon the agreement's conclusion.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Horani told Jordan Television that, according to the agreement, Anadarko will drill two exploratory wells in the next four months to ascertain the presence of oil and gas in the Safawi region.

NRA Director General Faysal Suheimat and Anadarko Vice-President B. Collins signed the agreement.

Resignations boost Yilmaz's...

(Continued from page 1)

the 18 independent deputies would back Mr. Yilmaz in the confidence vote. Two of those who resigned who joined the far-right Nationalist Action Party on Friday are expected to remain neutral or support Mr. Yilmaz.

Two seats are empty in the assembly in which the anti-Yilmaz front controls 272 seats — 154 RP, 107 DYP, eight from the far-right Grand Unity Party and three independent deputies.

The parliament speaker, Mustafa Kalemli, a deputy from Anap, does not vote.

The wave of resignations came shortly after Mr. Erbakan and his allies presented a petition against Mr. Yilmaz, signed by a majority of deputies, to Mr. Demirel on Wednesday as part of a move to urge Mr. Yilmaz to return the mandate.

Mr. Demirel described the move on Saturday as undemocratic and unconstitutional.

Around a fifth of the True Path's deputies have quit since Ms. Ciller, under pressure from corruption charges, dropped strong criticism of the Islamists and joined Mr. Erbakan in government last year. Businessmen, labour

unions and bankers have expressed their support for Mr. Yilmaz, a free-market conservative.

They say pro-Western Mr. Yilmaz, 50, may take the necessary measures to solve chronic economic problems and reduce the political tension.

These tensions have been aggravated by frequent rows with secularists, led by the army, over the role of religion in public life and NATO-member Turkey's ties to the Muslim World.

"We are ready to give full support if the new government seeks to solve the major economic problems. We will be its soldiers," Mehmet Yildirim, head of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, told Reuters.

Husamettin Kavi, chairman of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry, said the new government would face severe economic problems, inherited from Mr. Erbakan's coalition.

The troubled Turkish economy has been struggling with high annual inflation, running at around 75 per cent, and a huge public deficit, at over nine per cent of the country's gross domestic product. Istanbul shares jumped by more than six per cent on Friday on rising hopes that Mr. Yilmaz would form the new government.



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali returns home after an official visit to Tunisia. The premier held talks with Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali on trade, tourism, culture and bilateral relations (Petra photo)

Premier returns from talks in Tunisia

Majali announces successful conclusion of contracts

AMMAN (J.T.) — Upon his return to Amman Saturday from an official visit to Tunisia, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali announced that he was able to successfully conclude agreements with the Tunisian government on cooperation between the national airlines of both countries and in bolstering bilateral relations in economic, cultural and political fields.

"Jordan and Tunisia share identical views on bilateral ties and pan-Arab causes," Dr. Majali stated. "Arabs must unify their stand in order to rise to the level of present challenges and develop a better future for the next generations."

He affirmed that Royal Jordanian (RJ) will be transporting passengers from Tunis to Canada and back and that Tunisia has pledged to represent Jordanian interests in Africa while the Kingdom will respond in turn for Tunisia on the continent of Asia.

The premier carried a message from His Majesty King Hussein to Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali and he confirmed that the King will visit Tunisia soon.

He described his visit to Tunisia as a link in a long chain of events sponsored by the Jordanian government, starting with visits to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to bolster inter-Arab ties.

Referring to tourism cooperation, Dr. Majali affirmed that the two countries would organise tourism programmes. Regarding the Middle East peace process and its current deadlock, Dr. Majali affirmed that Jordan and Tunisia share identical views.

"There are obstacles blocking the peace process due to the current Israeli leadership — the only way to resolve the issue is through negotiation with neutral third parties or even directly with the Israeli government to remove present obstacles."

Dr. Majali described East Jerusalem as occupied territory and stated that the question of its status is covered in U.N. Security Resolution 242. Returning with the prime minister were Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Bassam Saket, Minister of Culture and Youth Qassem Abu Ein and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akiel Bitaji.

AMMAN — The family of Corporal Ahmad Dakamseh, currently standing trial on charges of killing seven Israeli schoolgirls, Saturday described their son as short-tempered, violent and often self-destructive.

"Ahmad is a quiet person, but when he becomes angry he loses his temper to the point of rage," said Kamleh Dakamseh, 57, the defendant's mother.

Ms. Dakamseh cited her son's attempt to take his own life subsequent to an argument with his father eleven years ago. "Ahmad jumped from a five-metre high wall after a fight with his father," she testified.

Ms. Dakamseh also confirmed that at one time she and her son argued and as a result, he swallowed prescription pills in an attempt to end his life.

The defendant's mother also stated that her son smashed a television set during an upset at his brother's wedding.

Cpl. Dakamseh's mother explained that at one time the defendant threw boiling water on a sister to punish her tardiness in bringing him food.

"My son requested that his sister prepare boiled eggs for him, but she was late and so he went to the kitchen to [inquire] about the delay but she had no answer," Ms. Dakamseh said. "He grabbed the pot of boiling water and threw it

upon her."

She told the court that her son suffered from psychological problems, and after his arrest on March 13, "I pleaded to His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan to treat my son's illness."

In April, Ms. Dakamseh pleaded for a fair trial for her son. She also described another son who committed suicide at the age of 16 subsequent to an argument with her husband.

Fatmah Hawatneh, 25, married to Cpl. Dakamseh since 1991, described her husband as possessed of a short temper and that "once he attempted to commit suicide because I unplugged a tape player."

"I asked him to lower the volume as we were going to sleep but he refused and so I unplugged the tape player," Ms. Hawatneh said. "He became angry, smashed [the machine] and then went outside and tried to jump into a water well but it was locked."

She added that at one point, Cpl. Dakamseh assaulted her after he, himself, was beaten by his father.

While visiting relatives, the couple's children fought with their relatives' children and "Ahmad began to encourage his children to attack the other children," Ms. Hawatneh recounted.

Cpl. Dakamseh's sister-in-law Amneh Dakamseh stated that the defendant beat her up several times.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

FRENCH-ARAB FILM FESTIVAL

* Two films entitled "Bye-bye" and "Mercedes" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Namat Al Naser at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until June 30.

* Paintings by contemporary Iraqi artists entitled "Ecology and Environment in Iraqi Art" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until July 12 (except Tuesdays).

* Spring Exhibition of Plastic Art '97 at Greater Amman Municipality, Ras Al 'Ain, until June 30.

* "Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition," shows work of 60 Arab artists, until July 24 at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh.

* "Byyoot Min Al Salt," shows works by Mohammad Jalous at Al Taqadom Association-Dabouq, Al Hummar, until June 30.

Jordan Times facsimile
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Earth Summit ends with more words than actions

UNITED NATIONS (R) — A weeklong U.N. Earth Summit ended early Saturday with its chairman delivering the verdict: "Our words have not been matched by deeds."

Razali Ismail, the blunt Malaysian U.N. General Assembly president, called the results of the session attended by dozens of presidents and prime ministers "sobering" but "honest" in not attempting to gloss over failures.

He accused the more than 170 participating nations of lacking the "political will to tackle critical issues" set out at a landmark 1992 environment summit in Rio De Janeiro. But he said there was widespread recognition that abject poverty affecting 1.3 billion people had to be eradicated if the world was to make economic and ecological progress.

And, he said, "we have advanced our understanding on the need for action on fresh water, forests, climate change and energy" policies.

Delegates made no firm commitments on greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate changes or on providing more aid to developing countries so they would not follow the polluting paths of wealthier industrialised nations.

Prospects, however, were good for new agreements on protecting fresh water in separate negotiations after the conference ended. On protecting forests, the session put off until 2000 a decision on whether to negotiate a treaty, pushed by Europe, Canada, Malaysia and Russia but opposed by the United States and Brazil.

Echoing Mr. Razali's words, Tanzania's U.N. ambassador, Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, representing Third World states, told the meeting: "The world is crying for positive answers. This session has not provided them."

Most industrial countries pledged at Rio to increase foreign aid to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product, a goal on the U.N. agenda since 1972. Only Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands have ever achieved this goal. Elsewhere aid has fallen to below 0.3 per cent, with the United States registering the sharpest drop in the last few years.

After five days of speechmaking, the conference's main

committee completed its work in a lighthearted atmosphere as a blizzard of amendments was gavelled into acceptance. The paper patchwork was then stitched together and passed on to the General Assembly's plenary, which adopted it shortly after 1 a.m. EDT (0500 GMT).

The final summit document, however, failed to include a political statement of intent because governments could not agree on one.

Instead a more general, shorter preamble was attached to the voluminous final document reaffirming the lofty principles set forth in Rio that enshrined the concept of "sustainable development" — economic growth compatible with social justice and ecological safety.

While acknowledging a number of positive achievements since Rio, the text said: "We are deeply concerned that the overall trends for sustainable development are worse today than they were in 1992."

Although delegates were encouraged by slower population growth, rising health standards and food production, the gains are being overshadowed by dwindling forests, farmlands and fish stocks, and pockets of severe poverty.

As expected, a major battle will take place before agreements on global warming are reached among industrial states meeting in Kyoto, Japan, in December.

Saturday's document speaks of "widespread but not universal agreement" on considering "legally binding, meaningful, realistic and equitable targets (that) will result in significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions within specified time frames, such as 2005, 2010 and 2020."

The European Union wanted specific goals now, which the United States, Japan, Canada and Australia rejected.

President Clinton in a Thursday night speech dwelt at length on the hazards of global warming and promised to educate the American people on the need to reduce use of energy and the dangers of carbon emissions.

He admitted the United States was the world's largest polluter, but he set no new targets.

Afghan opposition forces close net on Taliban enclave in north

KABUL (AFP) — Opposition forces are closing the net around the Taliban enclave of Baghlan and Kunduz cities in northern Afghanistan, a spokesman said Saturday.

"The road between Kunduz and Baghlan has been cut and the siege of Kunduz is getting tighter and tighter," anti-Taliban alliance spokesman Abdullah told AFP in Kabul by satellite telephone.

A mixed force of Taliban regulars and local commanders who mutinied in their support have held Kunduz city 340 kilometres north of Kabul and nearby Baghlan city in defiance of a stronger surrounding opposition force.

"We are not in a hurry. We will recapture Kunduz sooner or later, by force or peacefully," said a confident Abdullah.

He added that for the past three days Taliban-controlled Kunduz Airport has been under opposition artillery bombardment, denying the surrounded Islamic militia further resupply by air.

The district centre of Khanabad which lies midway between Kunduz capital and neighbouring Takhar

provincial capital Taloqan was now back under the control of the anti-Taliban alliance forces, Mr. Abdullah said.

The opposition alliance lost Kunduz when local commanders Arif Khan and Ghulam defected 10 days ago to a mobile Taliban force that had earlier taken sanctuary in Baghlan, 75 kilometres to the south.

Mr. Abdullah said Mr. Ghulam had agreed to return to the anti-Taliban alliance while negotiations with Arif Khan were still going on. The two commanders are ethnic Pashtoon, like most of the Taliban Muslim movement.

Fresh fighting was reported in Baghlan between pro-Taliban Commander Bashir, and the joint opposition forces who claimed some territorial gains according to Mr. Abdullah.

Negotiations have also started between Mr. Bashir and the representatives of the ethnic Uzbek faction led by General Abdul Malik, who deposed General Abdul Rashid Dostum, now in exile in Turkey, in a coup last May.

Gen. Malik has joined ex-President Burhanuddin

Rabbani, ousted from Kabul by the Taliban in September 1996, and the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat faction led by Karim Khalili in the formation of a new Afghan government to rival the Taliban.

Mr. Rabbani is represented in the field by Commander Ahmad Shah Masood, who gained international renown as a guerrilla fighter during the ill-fated 1979-89 Russian occupation of Afghanistan.

Mr. Rabbani's headquarters is now Taloqan city, which was bombed last Wednesday by a Taliban jet, the latest casualty count from which is eight civilians killed and 12 seriously wounded.

No major clashes were reported Saturday from the main frontlines north of Kabul between the Islamic militants and Mr. Masood's fighters based in Jalalabad.

However, skirmishes between the Taliban and Hezb-i-Wahdat are heating up in the Ghorband Valley north-west of the Afghan capital, and in the Wardak provincial centre of Jalrez to the southwest.

North Korea to seal off border to mourn Kim Il-Sung's death

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea will seal off its border for two days from July 7 to observe the third anniversary of the death of late President Kim Il-Sung, South Korean Red Cross officials said Saturday.

"North Korean Red Cross officials informed our staff in Dandong that the North will close the border on July 7 and 8," said a spokesman of the South Korean Red Cross.

"Therefore, the delivery of food aid to North Korea through China will be suspended during this period," he said.

South Korean Red Cross officials have been staying in Dandong in northeastern China to help transport food aid across the Yalu River to the hungry North.

They have so far delivered 24,346 tonnes of 50,000 tonnes of corn the South had committed to the North at Red Cross talks in May. It was not the first time the closed Communist country has announced the closure of its border to mourn the death of its founding father, Kim Il-Sung, who died of a heart attack

on July 8, 1994. During the first and second anniversary of the death of Kim Il-Sung, North Korea closed the border and ordered most foreigners to leave the country for a while.

North Korean officials hinted that Kim Il-Sung's son and de-facto leader, Kim Jong-Il, would take over his father's official mantle as state president and general secretary of the ruling Workers Party after the North observes the third anniversary of the senior Kim's demise.

He said the delivery of food aid to North Korea through China will be suspended during this period.

U.S. to begin nuclear experiment

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Energy Department said Friday it would begin controversial new underground nuclear weapons-related tests on July 2.

"We're going ahead with our subcritical experiments Wednesday, July 2," an Energy Department spokeswoman said.

The government had been under a court order not to announce any tests until Friday evening, when a federal judge was expected to rule on a lawsuit filed by anti-nuclear groups seeking to stop the \$40 billion programme designed to main-

tain the U.S. nuclear arsenal without exploding weapons. The judge issued no decision Friday, according to the Energy Department spokesman, Chris Kielich.

Anti-nuclear groups argue that while the U.S. experiments are in line with the letter of an international test ban treaty, they violate the spirit of the pact.

"They're maintaining the ability to break out of the test ban should a future president decide to," said Bruce Hall, nuclear disarmament campaigner for Greenpeace. "Our commitment to the comprehensive test ban

treaty should be seen as nothing short of permanent."

The Clinton administration says the experiments are needed to assess how age affects the materials in the nuclear stockpile and to predict how the weapons will perform without testing them.

But in a letter to President Bill Clinton last week, 44 House lawmakers urged the administration to drop its test plans, saying that the U.S. programme would encourage other nations with less high-tech equipment to justify underground testing.

Berisha vows to end chaos if party reelected

TIRANA (AFP) — President Sali Berisha vowed Saturday to crack down on criminal gangs and to restore order to lawless Albania if his party is reelected in this weekend's crucial vote.

Promising to end the chaos and banditry that affects large areas of the country Mr. Berisha told reporters: "In 75 days we will restore peace and order. We will do what all countries do with criminals. We will restore peace and stability for sure (using) different means."

He gave no further details of his plan on a day when all politicians and their parties are supposed to remain silent on matters relating to Sunday's vote.

The snap legislative elections were called in March as the country descended into armed rebellion against Mr. Berisha and his ruling Democratic Party. Sunday's vote is hoped will produce a broad-based parliament that will end the present divisions in the country.

Mr. Berisha himself is not up for reelection. He ensured that Albania's Democratic Party-dominated parliament that was dissolved earlier this month gave him a fresh five-year mandate at the height of the unrest in early March.

It is not clear who is likely to win Sunday's vote since the country is in such disarray, there are no opinion polls nor accurate assessments of voter intentions.

However, Mr. Berisha remains deeply unpopular in some parts of Albania, especially those in the south where the armed rebellion was sparked by the collapse of fraudulent investment schemes in which thousands lost their savings.

This week, a former leader of rebels in Vlore now running for parliament, warned that fresh attempts to oust Mr. Berisha would start again if he won the election. The southern port was the first town to overthrow government authority in March. "The people will vote and they will remove Berisha," Albert Shyti was quoted as telling an election rally, the Albanian Daily News reported Saturday.

"If they don't remove him with their votes, they will take up their guns and remove him with their guns," Mr. Shyti said.



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is greeted by handicapped Vietnamese, many of whom are landmine victims, as she visits the Thu Duc Vocational Training Centre in Ho Chi Minh City Saturday. The school for the handicapped is supported partly by the U.S. government (Reuters photo)

Albright ends visit to Vietnam

HO CHI MINH CITY (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright departed Ho Chi Minh City for Hong Kong Saturday, ending a two-day visit to Vietnam to boost bilateral relations.

She will be representing the United States at the ceremony marking the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule at midnight June 30.

Mrs. Albright, who is the most senior U.S. official to visit the former Saigon, Saturday laid the first brick of a new consulate here in a gesture she said underscored Washington's resolve to look to the future with Vietnam.

The new consulate will be built next to the former U.S. embassy in Saigon, site of a dramatic helicopter evacuation on April 30, 1975 as the city fell to the Communist forces of the North.

"To be able to look towards the future while standing in the shadow of the past makes it a very special event," Mrs. Albright said.

The consulate, part of an agreement allowing Vietnam to also establish a presence in San Francisco, will provide services to 3,000 U.S. residents in this South Vietnamese city and to the

75,000 American tourists who pass through every year.

The former embassy building was used by Vietnam's state-owned oil corporation after the fall of Saigon and returned to the United States in 1995.

After the ceremony Mrs. Albright, who is the first U.S. Secretary of State to visit Ho Chi Minh City since the end of the war, dropped by the central market to purchase souvenirs, toured a centre fabricating artificial limbs and held a meeting with U.S. businessmen. "It is very hard to get away from the past," she told reporters at the end of her whirlwind tour.

"Clearly we all, whether American or Vietnamese, are never going to be able fully to put the past behind us."

"But what I have been deeply moved by is the desire of the people to look forward to the future," she added.

More than 58,000 Americans and three million Vietnamese lost their lives in the war.

But Mrs. Albright repeatedly underscored here that the United States wants to

broaden relations with Vietnam and focus on economic ties.

In Ho Chi Minh City, she met with Communist Party chief Duong Muoi who asked Washington for assistance to help the victims of Agent Orange, the chemical defoliant used by the U.S. Air Force during the war.

Mrs. Albright pledged U.S. cooperation to carry out scientific research on the effects of Agent Orange. U.S. officials said.

During her Friday talks with Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet she raised human rights and warned that the lack of press, religious and political freedoms could tarnish Vietnam's standing in the international community. On Friday, Mrs. Albright and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam signed a copyright agreement touted by both sides as yet another step towards normal economic relations, nearly two years after diplomatic ties were established.

Washington hopes to sign a trade agreement with Vietnam that could pave the way to Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status for the South East Asian country and U.S. investment support.

U.K. Conservatives oppose separate Scottish parliament

PERTH (R) — Britain's Conservative leader William Hague tried to rally demoralised party members after their crushing general election defeat by calling for all-out opposition to plans for a separate Scottish parliament.

Winding up the annual Scottish Conservative Conference, Mr. Hague, elected as leader only last week, said the Labour government's proposals for a Scottish parliament were a recipe for disaster, disruption and the break-up of the United Kingdom.

"One of our principles is the staunch defence of the union. We will never, ever abandon it," he said. "Let me be crystal clear, Conservatives will call upon the Scottish people to oppose the creation of a Scottish parliament."

But he acknowledged that the majority of Scots wanted power devolved from London after 300 years of union between the two countries.

their conscience.

Many pro-devolution activists boycotted the Conservative conference, which voted massively in favour of a "no" referendum vote but to fight every seat if a Scottish parliament is set up.

Some grass-roots workers say many Scots perceive the party as English-dominated and believe only a completely separate Scottish party can avert a repeat of the May 1 election failure.

Mr. Hague, at 36 the youngest Conservative leader for more than 200 years, said he was aware of Scots' disquiet over a leadership election in which they had no vote because there were no Scottish members of parliament.

"I will seek the endorsement of the whole party for my leadership at a special party conference. It will be held under a secret ballot," he said. "Without the full support of members in the constituencies I cannot and will not lead the party."

A poll in the Scotsman newspaper said six out of 10 Scots felt the Conservatives should remain neutral in the referendum campaign and allow individuals to follow

Burma opposition rejects terrorism slur

RANGOON (AFP) — The party of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi Saturday denied claims by the ruling military that it was involved in a U.S.-funded terrorist conspiracy which has led to the arrest of several of her relatives.

A senior official of the National League for Democracy (NLD) told AFP that cousins of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi were among the seven accused by Burmese authorities of being "directly involved" in the plot.

None of those arrested two weeks ago, including Cho Aung Than, who until recently was a close personal aide of the NLD leader, have been formerly charged.

Three or four other suspects, who were not named, had also been taken in for questioning, but were likely to be released soon, military intelligence officials said Friday.

The NLD official branded the claims as "heinous accusations" made as the Rangoon junta attempts to marginalise the NLD, which was voted into power in the last elections held in Burma in 1990.

"The SLORC are speaking as if we're a secret organisation trying to overthrow a legitimate government, but they are the ones fighting a punitive war (against us)," the official said.

On Friday, Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Burma's military intelli-

gence chief charged that the NLD had nefarious links with exiled pro-democrat opposition groups responsible for assassination plots against top generals.

In a rambling two-and-a-half hour monologue he alleged the NLD had received U.S. government cash from the same voluntary organisations which had given financial and logistical support to the alleged terrorist groups.

The conspiracy also involved smuggling documents and materials in and out of Burma, including a video of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi in ethnic costume that was sent to Bangkok to support a fundraising event for Karen refugees.

Congo president pleads for French help

BRAZZAVILLE (R) — Congo pleaded for immediate French military help against armed rebels who claimed Friday to have won the battle for Brazzaville Airport.

"If France does not act as rapidly as possible, Congo's democratic regime will live or perish in bloodshed," Ambassador to Paris Pierre-Michel Ngumbi told members of the French National Assembly in a letter released to the press.

Mr. Ngumbi asked the deputies to "intervene with the government to demand that it carry out a real policy of military help to save Congo from a very probable humanitarian and political disaster."

Former Marxist leader Denis Sassou Nguesso, who led a one-party People's Republic of Congo for 13 years until free elections in 1992, has used his private army to fight government forces since early June.

He launched a vicious assault on the capital's Maya-Maya Airport Wednesday and claimed victory Friday, when heavy artillery that had boomed for two days continued sporadically.

"Our partisan forces are in full control of Maya-Maya. It is now safe to land, but the runway has been damaged and would be a bit hard to negotiate," a Sassou spokesman told Reuters.

President Pascal Lissouba denied the claim, but a pilot in Kinshasa who radioed Maya-Maya control tower quoted officials as saying the whole airport was controlled by Mr. Sassou's men.

In the divided city centre, fighting intensified near the French embassy where Ambassador Raymond Cesaire and some 30 other French nationals are stranded.

Mortar bombs crashed into the streets around as soldiers from what is left of the fragmented national army looted any remaining goods.

France, which withdrew 1,250 soldiers from Brazzaville a week ago, has ordered a review of military ties to old African colonies and has declined to join a proposed U.N. peacekeeping force for Congo.

Chances look slim that it would agree to the request for help from Mr. Lissouba, whose own men assaulted Ambassador Cesaire and his bodyguard Wednesday.

"Congo, with whom France has maintained a long relationship due to history and 40-year-old policy of cooperation, is despairing to see a friend abandon it," Ambassador Ngumbi wrote in Paris.

French embassy officials in Brazzaville said Congo's security minister cancelled a meeting with Mr. Cesaire, saying Mr. Sassou's followers had assassinated two sub-prefects in northern towns and Mr. Lissouba had called a crisis cabinet meeting.

Some 16 people died in northern clashes just before the civil war erupted on June 5 when Mr. Lissouba tried to disarm Mr. Sassou. The fighting has otherwise been confined to the former French colonial capital of a million people.

The clashes, dampened for a week by a ceasefire before they resumed this week, have killed some 1,000 to 3,000 residents and sent thousands more fleeing to the outskirts for safety.

Many sought refuge in southern Brazzaville, held by the neutral city Mayor Bernard Kolelas, but shelling has caused damage there as well.

Mr. Lissouba holds a central part and Mr. Sassou the north of the city that hugs the bank of the Congo River, facing Kinshasa, capital of what was the Belgian Congo.



A billowing gray cloud rises an estimated 20,000 feet from the Soufriere Hills Volcano on the small Caribbean island of Monserrat in this April 6, 1996 file photo. Rescue workers on June 26 found the bodies of 10 people that were killed in the June 25 deadly blast from the Soufriere Hills Volcano. The dead were the first victims of the volcano since it roared to life in a rain of ash, rock and smoke on July 18, 1995, ending nearly four centuries of virtual dormancy (Reuter photo)

10 dead as Monserrat volcano lets loose fire, lava

POINTE-A-PITRE (AFP) — Ten people were confirmed dead Friday and 12 more were missing after a volcanic eruption and lava flow hit the British Caribbean island of Monserrat, authorities said.

The death toll from Soufriere Hills Volcano's eruption Wednesday rose even as hope faded that 12 persons still unaccounted for would be found alive.

"Things seem to be getting a bit worse actually," Monserrat's Chief Minister Bertrand Osborne told reporters there on Friday afternoon confirming there were two small explosive eruptions earlier in the day.

Mr. Osborne said the 12 missing were believed to be in one of three villages "completely submerged" by ash and other debris.

Unsettled conditions were hampering rescue efforts. A French Air Force Puma helicopter flew in at Monserrat authorities' request, and was able to evacuate three people

including an elderly couple whose home was buried in three metres of ash.

"The situation on the ground is such that the local authorities cannot determine just how many dead and missing there are," one of the French military officers who flew the mission said privately.

And scientists monitoring the volcano say "from the instruments that ... activity seems to be building up," Mr. Osborne said.

In London, officials said Britain has sent four helicopters, including one specially equipped to treat burns. But it was not clear when they would arrive.

The British ships HMS Liverpool which has a Lynx helicopter on board, and another vessel, Black Rover, were expected in Monserrat late Saturday.

French military assistance was not expected to continue Saturday, sources in Guadeloupe said.

Meanwhile, residents of Cork Hill, a community on the northwest of the island, were advised to leave for the safe northern zone because scientists said another deadly lava flow was possible.

The deaths and injuries were the first caused by the volcano which has kept the 100-square-kilometre self-governing British colony on edge since roaring back to life nearly two years ago.

The southern half of the island, including the capital Plymouth, was abandoned after being declared a danger zone during the early phase of the crisis on Monserrat. 80 kilometres northwest of here.

There has been a subsequent exodus of almost half of the British colony's 11,000 population because of deteriorating economic and social conditions. Most remaining residents live in cramped shelters in the north.

Authorities said Wednesday's eruption and lava flow destroyed 175 houses.

Five survivors suffering from burns were airlifted to the nearby French departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe for treatment.

Medical aid was on the way from the 14-nation Caribbean community, the chief minister said.

Meanwhile, Monserrat residents were urged to wear dust masks because of volcanic ash in the air.

A high level of seismic activity "means that these flows could happen at any time and may be of significant size," a Monserrat government Internet report said.

"Residents must not approach, handle or attempt to walk on the deposits because of the risk of severe burning," the site said.

The island's airport will remain closed until further notice.

The last volcano to have caused multiple losses of life in the Caribbean was back in 1804 when Montserrat's Mont Pelee erupted.

New French government opposes full return to NATO

PARIS (R) — France's left-wing government has said the time was not ripe for Paris to return to the military wing of NATO, but left the next move to Gaullist President Jacques Chirac.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said it was up to Mr. Chirac to decide whether to pursue the initiative because it was Mr. Chirac who had proposed France's return to the military wing.

France pulled out in 1966 under General Charles de Gaulle, accusing the alliance of being dominated by Washington.

"Without prejudging the president's assessment, conditions set to pursue the process do not seem to be fulfilled," Mr. Rummelhardt told a news briefing ahead of a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit in Madrid next month.

The statement appeared to be a reminder to Mr. Chirac, who will represent France at the summit, of the position of Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. Mr. Jospin, who has shared power with the conservative president since the left won a parlia-

mentary election on June 1, will not be going to Madrid.

The Elysee Presidential Palace had no immediate comment on Mr. Chirac's intentions.

But presidential sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the French head of state felt there was still room for progress on NATO reform and he planned to keep all his options open ahead of the key Madrid meeting.

In Brussels, NATO officials said the alliance would respect Paris' decision but carry on working towards that goal.

The officials said there had been a rapprochement between France and its allies in military affairs over recent years and they expected this to continue even if the country remained formally out of the military wing.

"What is important is that the 'ad hoc' arrangements employed in recent years continue," one official said.

As a condition for a return to full NATO participation, Mr. Chirac had demanded that the United States hand over to a European officer

NATO's Southern Command, the Naples-based AFSouth which includes the U.S. Mediterranean Sixth Fleet.

Washington, which also runs NATO's Supreme Command based in Belgium, has rejected the French condition, saying this month it had stopped trying to resolve the long-running dispute.

Mr. Rummelhardt said the issues to be debated at the July 8 summit "concern both the president and the prime minister."

"Regarding France and NATO, the president of the republic has taken the initiative of a rapprochement... It is natural that he assess himself whether he should go further in that direction," he said.

Privately Jospin aides said dropping the NATO initiative buoyed both Mr. Jospin and Mr. Chirac by eliminating a potentially contentious issue from their shared agenda.

The issue of the command of NATO's strategic southern flank is part of a troubled wider reform of the alliance's outdated command structures, aimed at

creating a European defence pillar within NATO.

Mr. Chirac has pushed for the creation of a greater role for Europeans within an expanded NATO as part of a restructuring to enable it to carry out more Bosnia-style peace missions outside its traditional area of operation.

The French Socialists have upbraided him for abandoning France's policy of trying to create a separate European defence identity and leading the country back into the military wing of the U.S.-dominated military bloc.

Parallel to their stand-off over AFSouth, Washington and Paris are also at odds over the alliance's enlargement, another issue likely to stir Franco-American differences in Madrid.

NATO is due to invite some countries from formerly Communist Eastern Europe to join the alliance.

The United States wants only Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to be asked to join, while France supports a broader enlargement including Slovenia and Romania.

Russian navy proposes joint exercise with Japan

TOKYO (R) — A senior officer of Russia's Pacific Fleet who arrived aboard the first Russian warship to visit Japan in 103 years said Saturday the Russian and Japanese navies should conduct joint exercises in the future.

"The era has now moved to building a relationship of cooperation between the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force (navy) and the Russian navy," Vice-Admiral Valery Chirov, Deputy Chief of the Russian Pacific Fleet, said.

"This includes exchanging visits by combat ships, officers and holding joint

naval manoeuvres," Adm. Chirov told a news conference aboard the 8,500-tonne destroyer Admiral Vinogradov.

Adm. Chirov did not elaborate on the proposed naval exercises, but said the Japanese Navy was not against the idea.

Last year, during a visit to Vladivostok by the Japanese destroyer Kurema, the two navies for the first time conducted joint communications and search-and-rescue training operations.

Admiral Vinogradov arrived at Tokyo's Harumi Pier Friday. The last Russian warship to pay a

courtesy visit to Japan was the armoured cruiser Admiral Kornikov which took part in events in 1894 marking the 25th wedding anniversary of Emperor Meiji.

Japan fought Russia four times this century and during the cold war years, Japan's navy regarded the Vladivostok-based Soviet Pacific Fleet as its biggest potential enemy.

"I was asking myself why it took us more than 100 years to come here," Adm. Chirov said.

"Friendship is superior to competition and now is the time to build a spirit

of cooperation across the bridge called the Sea of Japan. I really must thank the Maritime Self-Defence Force for this."

Adm. Chirov said Russia's latest cutback of 200,000 military personnel, announced by former Defence Minister Igor Rodionov in May, would affect the strength of the Pacific Fleet but said there were no concrete plans.

Adm. Chirov also said there were no immediate plans to close some bases, such as the strategic submarine base at Petro-Pavlovsk in Kamchatka.

Typhoon claims one life in Japan

TOKYO (R) — Typhoon Peter stormed through southwestern Japan Saturday, killing one person, disrupting air, rail and road traffic and triggering landslides.

The second typhoon to hit Japan this month, Peter was packing maximum winds of 108 kph (67.5 mph) and was expected to dump up to 35 centimetres of rain, the Meteorological Agency said.

As of 3.00 p.m. (0600 GMT), typhoon Peter was

churning through Yamaguchi prefecture, 780 kilometres southwest of Tokyo, the agency said.

Police said a 44-year-old woman drowned after falling into a river while trying to get into her car.

The typhoon was moving northeast towards central Japan at a speed of 40 kph (25 mph), the Meteorological Agency said.

Some 380 domestic flights were cancelled because of the typhoon, airline companies said.

Police said the typhoon caused landslides at more than 20 locations on Japan's southern main island Kyushu.

The Meteorological Agency issued flash flood warnings throughout southern and central Japan, including Tokyo, due to heavy rains forecast in the wake of typhoon Peter.

Last week, typhoon Opal killed one person and disrupted air, rail and road traffic when it hit central Japan.

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Mexico

polls show ruling party heading for defeat

MEXICO CITY (R) — President Ernesto Zedillo's party is heading for its worst result ever in congressional elections on July 6, according to the last opinion polls published before a ban on surveys takes effect Saturday.

Four national surveys published Thursday and Friday showed Mr. Zedillo's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) losing its 68-year-old grip on the lower house of Congress, though they differed over the margin of the setback.

More bad news for Mr. Zedillo came from polls in the capital city, which all pointed to a huge victory in the mayor's election for a man many see as the PRI's nemesis, veteran left-winger Cuauhtemoc Cardenas.

Many Mexicans believe Mr. Cardenas was the real winner of the 1988 presidential election, which officially went to the PRI's Carlos Salinas amid allegations of massive fraud. The PRI always denied wrongdoing but ordered the voting papers to be burned to prevent a recount.

On July 6, Mexicans will elect a new Chamber of Deputies, a quarter of the Senate, six state governors and, for the first time, a mayor of Mexico City. Previous mayors of the capital were always nominated by the president.

The PRI's huge Senate majority is not threatened by the renewal of just a quarter of senators.

But the loss of its lower house majority could cause big headaches for Mr. Zedillo in getting reforms and the annual budget passed.

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Russian train blast death toll hits 5

MOSCOW (R) — Five people were killed and 11 hurt in a bomb explosion on a Russian train, the Emergency Ministry said Saturday.

A ministry spokesman told ITAR-TASS news agency the toll had risen from the three initially reported killed in Friday's blast on train number 24 from Moscow to St. Petersburg.

The ministry did not confirm a report by Interfax News Agency, which quoted a local official on the scene of the blast as saying six people had been killed.

An Emergency Ministry official said Friday a bomb had been hidden in the lavatory of a carriage and that it exploded at about 6:30 p.m. (1430 GMT) near Torbino Station in the Novgorod region northwest of Moscow.

The ministry said a teenager and a man of about 70

were among the dead. The remains of three other people had not yet been identified.

Four of the victims died immediately and one succumbed to his or her injuries in hospital. At least two of the injured were in a serious condition, the ministry said.

Interfax quoted an Emergency Ministry official as saying that, according to preliminary investigations, the blast was the work of an unidentified suicide bomber.

The ministry did not confirm the report.

The Federal Security Service sent a team of investigators, including an expert on terrorism, but said it had found nothing to prove that the blast was a guerrilla act.

Railways Minister Nikolai Aksenenko was among officials and security police who headed for the site of the

blast. Russian television said.

TASS said the train had been able to continue to St. Petersburg and that trains were again running on the line.

Several bomb blasts have rocked the Russian transport network in recent months. Earlier this year, four people were killed in explosions at two different railway stations in southern Russia.

Moscow blamed those blasts on Chechen rebels but separatist leaders in the southern region, torn by a 21-month conflict with Russian troops which ended last August, denied any involvement.

Last year four people were killed in a bomb explosion on the Moscow subway and dozens were injured in blasts on two trolleybuses in the capital.

Mobutu hospitalised in Morocco

RABAT (R) — The ousted leader of Zaïre Mobutu Sese Seko was admitted to hospital Friday in the Moroccan capital, a medical source said.

"President Mobutu was admitted Friday night into the cardiology department at the (Rabat) Avicene Hospital," a senior Moroccan doctor, who declined to be named, told Reuters.

Mr. Mobutu was staying with his family in the northern province of Tangiers but "for health reasons, doctors advised him to undergo a medical examination in the sophisticated Avicene Hospital," the doctor said.

"At this stage, Mobutu's health is not too bad," he said.

The cardiology department, on the fifth floor of the state-run Avicene Hospital, was heavily guarded by Moroccan security forces.

Mr. Mobutu was taken to the fifth floor in a wheelchair as he could not walk by himself, the doctor said.

Zaïre's former president moved to the sea resort at Cap Spartel, north of Tangiers last week, where he was expected to spend up to six weeks, officials said. He arrived in the kingdom last month with an entourage of around 30 people.

Mr. Mobutu, ousted after a seven-month-long rebellion following three decades in power, has been suffering from prostate cancer for which he had extensive treatment in Europe.

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Strategy needs thought

NOW THAT Jordan has adopted an information policy that is not much different from that of many other Arab countries, it seems logical for the Ministry of Information to call for a unified strategy for their media.

In comments made to the Arab information ministers meeting in Cairo two days ago, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi expressed Jordan's interest in developing a joint Arab media policy "in light of new developments in the communications field."

The minister was right of course when he pointed to the enormous challenges that the communications revolution is posing to the Arab World. He was also very right to insist on the need to unify efforts to make the Arab voice reach the outside world. But to have credibility and to make the outside world listen to our voice necessitates more than the adoption of a unified media policy by the Arab countries. There is a dire need to develop our information industry as a whole.

The outside world, which becomes more used and accustomed to open dialogue and free speech by the day, could not possibly accept and believe in arguments forwarded by undemocratic systems. It will not be interested in hearing or reading either news of political personalities meeting each other or in the "achievements" they make. If there is genuine desire on behalf of our Arab countries to live up to the aspirations of our people and to let their voice be heard, the regimes should lift all bans and curbs against freedom of expression and freedom of the press. There could not be any credibility for the message that the Arab World wants to send to the international community if we remain hindered by the so many restrictions and taboos that exist today.

But then the media cannot be free unless the political system within which it operates is open and democratic. Arab information ministers can go on preaching a unified strategy for themselves. That strategy, however, will bear no fruit unless the Arab system as a whole changes its ways and adopts policies of change. These policies should include political freedoms, individual liberties and, above all, freedom of thought and expression.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily expressed the view that the countries of the "Damascus Declaration", which groups Egypt, Syria and six Arab Gulf states, has achieved nothing for these countries or the Arab Nation as a whole. These countries failed in their meeting to reach consensus on whether to organise the controversial Doha economic summit later this year or to take common action to confront the U.S.-Israeli policies in the Middle East, according to Tareq Masarweh. The writer said that the participating countries failed to take action towards ending the embargo on Iraq because some of them want to maintain this embargo and others seem indifferent to or afraid of Washington's retaliation. All that these countries agree on, he said, is the need to create an Arab Common Market, something which the Arab League called for more than 30 years ago, long before the European Union was formed. The Arabs need no meaningless meetings, like the one that took place in the Syrian city of Latakia, they rather need practical steps to enable them to regain their rights and protect their national interests in deed rather than word. He said that one example of the pointless meetings was the Arab summit meeting which was held in Amman in 1980 when leaders agreed to carry out a 10-year economic plan which, had it been implemented, would have provided real protection for the Arab World.

A WRITER for Al Ra'i quoted an article in the British Economist magazine, published earlier this month, expressing the view that dictatorship in the Arab World is there to stay for ever. Fahed Fanek quoted the weekly as stating that except for Lebanon, no Arab leader has been changed in the Arab World and that the average ruling time, by most of the 22 Arab countries' rulers, is 22 years, that is at least for a whole generation. It is no wonder then to see Arabs shunning any participation in political parties and even refraining from reading newspapers which serve the Arab regimes, said the writer who noted that in countries like Tunisia or Egypt, the ruling party wins more than 99 per cent of the votes in any election, making such elections ridiculous. The writer said that dictatorship is bound to continue in the Arab World because the ruler considers the wealth of his country as his own and acts accordingly, on the one hand, and because the rate of population growth and the rate of illiteracy are among the highest in the world, on the other. Furthermore, the writer quoted the magazine as pointing out to the fact that the Arab rulers exploit Islam to legitimise their rule and that many of the Arab rulers claim that their countries need no reform of any kind because they are democracies setting a good example for others to follow.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

'The high interest rate on dinars will not last for long'

THERE IS near consensus that the prevailing interest rate on the dinar is too high. Banks are paying up to 10 per cent per annum on time deposits. They charge around 15 per cent on credit facilities. Taking into account that the expected inflation rate is not more than 4 per cent, we can conclude that the real interest rate on the dinar is in the range of 6 to 11 per cent, depending on whether we look at it from a depositor's or a borrower's point of view. The normal real interest rate is usually put at 3 per cent.

This state of affairs suggests that the current high interest rate on the dinar will not last for long; interest rates will not rise further anymore, and the likelihood of decline is a strong possibility.

As a matter of fact, the interest on dinars did decline, as shown by the latest batch of certificates of deposits (CDs) issued by the Central Bank and sold by auction. CDs were sold at one quarter to one half percentage point below the rate of the previous batch of CDs the price of which was fixed by the Central Bank. This selling at auction of CDs is seen as a sign that the Central Bank is ready to cause interest rates to decline, albeit slowly and over a long period of time.

The minimal decline of interest rates allowed by the Central Bank will not alter the current state of affairs. Its importance lies in the fact that it gives a signal to the effect that interest rates on the dinar have peaked and started to drop. Of course, the interest rate will continue to be on the high side for several months to come, but the direction is now clear: the decline is only a matter of time. When can business circles expect the Central Bank to

ease its monetary policy, reduce interest rates to a reasonable level, and allow more liquidity instead of draining it from the market? It is very difficult to answer these questions. Even the officials at the Central Bank have no definite answer. They are unable to tell us when they will allow higher level of liquidity and lower level of interest. However there are some indicative signals to watch out.

In order for the Central Bank to relax its policy in an effective manner, it should feel comfortable regarding four indicators:

— It should accumulate a reserve of foreign exchange no less than \$1.25 billion. The current level is \$950 million. The target may be reached some time in 1998.

— The deficit in the current account of the balance of payments should drop to below 3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP); currently it is very close to this benchmark.

— It should see that the public is converting its dollar deposits back to dinars. This is happening right now, but very slowly and with hesitation.

— Businessmen should cease to borrow in dinars, by virtue of their dollar deposits, since this amounts to speculation against the dinar. This practice is still there, even though such businessmen got their fingers burnt.

High interest rates cost the Central Bank tens of millions of dinars every year. They cost the economy at least three percentage points of annual growth. No one wants this to continue longer than it should, but one should admit that the costly policy is not without justification.

Netanyahu has angry friends

By William Safire

TEL AVIV — You think Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu don't trust each other? You think Ehud Barak, the Labour Party's new top man, and Prime Minister Netanyahu don't trust each other? Those fierce feelings are as nothing compared with the depth of distrust felt for one another by Bibi and almost all the longtime leaders of his own right-wing coalition.

Benny Begin, high-principled son of Menachem Begin, bailed out with a blast after the Hebron partial pullout. Moshe Arens, Bibi's longtime mentor who was frozen out the minute Bibi gained power, calls the trust factor of his former protégé's "character flaw."

The internecine warfare escalated with the induced resignation, June 20, of Finance Minister Dan Meridor, a moderate Likudnik "prince" respected by intellectuals and the media, who had shown lukewarm support for Bibi during the ordeal of the "Bar-On affair." The day after Israel's Supreme Court closed that flimsy case, a financial policy crisis was precipitated and Mr. Meridor, overruled by Bibi, resigned.

After a year of wincing whenever he heard the

prime minister ask, in English, how he could "control the spin," Mr. Meridor was glad to be able to erase his wimpy reputation with a gutsy departure. As Arik Sharon neatly put it, "Dan leaped out of a ground-floor window."

Mr. Netanyahu surely knows that Mr. Sharon trusts him as little as Mr. Meridor does. Exactly a year ago, after Mr. Sharon's help with the religious vote helped put him in office, Bibi tried to double-cross Arik with a minor post, and then had to create a ministry when friends of the white-haired lion of Likud threatened a revolt.

"Bibi takes us for granted. Because I am his friend, because I share his political vision, immigrants have to suffer?"

But now Bibi needs Arik's far-right influence again, and has slotted him into Mr. Meridor's empty finance post. Clever manoeuvre: out goes the irritating centrist on a policy pretext, and into that top slot goes the hardliner whose straight talk is trusted by rabbis and Arabs.

Yet maybe not so clever.

The waltzing-out of Mr. Meridor upset the one cabinet member Bibi cannot afford to lose, Natan Sharansky, whose party of immigrants has seven votes in the Knesset. Should the former Soviet dissident decide to take a walk, Bibi's government would fall.

And Mr. Sharansky is plenty sore. Not only were Bibi's promises to his constituents broken, but the promise to clear appointments — such as ambassador to Russia — through a Meridor-Sharansky filter was ignored.

—He has one foot out the door. "Bibi takes us for granted. Because I am his friend, because I share his political vision, immigrants have to suffer?" He no longer trusts his friend and, no stranger to dissent, won't accept coalition discipline in parliament.

When the irate Sharansky boycotted the June 20 cabinet meeting, Bibi got the message. Mindful of his friend's own worries about

Mafia-connection smears, he showered the absent man with more power to review appointments, the source of so much Netanyahu grief so far. That takes him past the current flap.

My purpose here is to illustrate what happens when one voter-friendly political leader dares to try to turn a parliamentary system, built on the British model, towards a presidential system adapted from the U.S. model.

Combined with a turn from Israel's semi-socialism, that is a wrenching systemic change. People who deride his personal ambition do not realise how ambitious is his goal.

His animus towards the establishment that launched him is a weakness. His relish in defeating it in detail is self-indulgent, the mark of the sore winner. Because his manipulation is so transparent, his spinning falls short of deft democratic deviousness.

He may fail. Israelis may decide that a greater concentration of executive power and diminution of splinter-party power is not right for them. Or they may be waiting for a leader who inspires more trust.

The New York Times

Okinawa, 'aircraft carrier island' is a militarists' dream

By Pierre-Antoine Donnet
Agence France-Presse

KADENA AIR BASE, Japan — Okinawa, the heart of the United States' military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, bristles with enough high-tech military hardware to make any potential enemy cringe.

"If a conflict would erupt, our role would be essential," said Major Edmund Memi, chief public affairs officer at the vast Kadena air base on Okinawa, the largest U.S. air base in the region.

"We have the airpower assets to contain it. We have the largest airfield in the Pacific," he said during a recent tour organized for reporters.

"In case of a conflict, we would first have to establish air superiority. Our fighters are equipped with missiles to destroy their targets. Once air superiority is established, we can let ground forces do what they have to do," he said.

A few hundred metres from where Maj. Memi is speaking sits a massive array of firepower — 54 F-15 jet fighters. Some \$6 billion worth of equipment is

found there, with four billion represented by the jets and armaments.

Flying at a maximum speed of Mach 2.5, and capable of in-flight refuelling, the F-15s on Okinawa are less than one hour from Pyongyang and Beijing, respectively 1,400 kilometres and 1,800 kilometres away.

The island, located 1,500 kilometres southwest of Tokyo, serves as a kind of aircraft carrier for American forces. In addition to the jets, there are 17,000 marines stationed on the island, including the rapid response 31st corps which would be the first to be sent by ship to any conflict in the region.

Kadena also has runways long enough to welcome the gigantic C-5 Galaxy transport planes, one of the largest ever made. Also stationed here are AWACS and Orion surveillance aircraft as well as KC-135 refuelling planes.

There are 23,000 soldiers and civilians on the base, which launched 14,000 flights lasting 26,000 hours in the year ended in October 1996.

"We are here to promote peace and stability in this region. We have been successful and I hope we will continue to be successful," said Brig. General John Baker, commander of the U.S. Air Force's 18th wing in Kadena.

"It is important to have a peaceful and stable environment for business and investments," he said.

As he spoke, two F-15s on training runs circled the base continuously. To reduce the impact on the local population — 90 per cent of whom voted for a reduction in the bases last year — the jets remain over the base and avoid urban zones.

Except for when they are heavily loaded, the F-15s generally take off without their afterburners, which provide a huge power surge but are incredibly noisy. They break the sound barrier only when they are far from Okinawa.

Anti-noise baffles have also been constructed and engines maintenance takes place in sound-proofed hangars. Training flights are suspended between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., on weekends

and holidays and during school exams.

The noise is among the principal nuisances endured by Okinawa residents, who also complain of crime and other problems caused by the military.

According to Governor Masahide Ota, who wants the bases to be eventually removed, Americans committed 4,823 crimes and misdemeanours since the island returned to Japanese rule from U.S. administration in 1972.

The rape of a 12-year-old girl in September 1995 by three U.S. soldiers notably increased the animosity of the population towards the bases.

To combat this, U.S. military officials now require new recruits to undergo sensitivity training on Okinawan customs and on the need to be "good neighbours."

Officials have also instituted restrictions on drinking and soldiers face strict punishment if convicted of misbehaviour and contend incidents have been reduced since the new measures were imposed.

Defactonomics

Reconciliation is a necessary condition for regional economic integration

By Dr. Tayseer Abdel Jaber

ARAB COUNTRIES are searching for a formula to achieve a potentially successful economic integration. They are doing that mostly individually but, in some cases, also at a regional or sub-regional level. They are quite concerned with facing the world economy under the new conditions of strong competition and openness.

Given that the traditional approach to import — substitution and protectionism — has lost its momentum and credibility, a question forces itself: What to do and how to adjust to the economic globalisation with its challenges and prospects?

Already much time was wasted. There were concrete initiatives taken as early as the 1950s. Agreements were reached under the umbrella of the Arab League on trade facilitation, transit trade, payments on current transactions, economic unity and a common market.

Millions of Arab workers moved from the labour-surplus to the Gulf countries and remitted billions of dollars in foreign exchange. Joint projects were established among Arab countries, worth over \$40 billion, and successful financial institutions were established. There are other areas of Arab cooperation, including culture, tourism, transport. However, such cooperation lacked the institutional framework that can sustain new steps towards further

economic integration. This is especially apparent in the area of intra-regional trade, which remained 9 per cent of the total Arab trade.

Now there are official attempts to create an Arab Common Market. An Arab Free Trade Area is supposed to begin operation next January, with the first 10 per cent reduction in customs.

Simultaneously, many Arab countries are already members of the World Trade Organisation or negotiating accession. The Association Agreement with the European Union has already been signed by Tunisia, Morocco and Palestine, and was initiated by Jordan. Other Arab Mediterranean countries are negotiating similar agreements.

It may be said that all these movements towards economic cooperation among Arab countries and with the European Union or worldwide are not contradictory. They are rather reinforcing one another and may lead in the future to more trade liberalisation.

Nevertheless, the region will remain fragmented as long as the economic embargo on Iraq and Libya is in place and the peace process is stalled by the Netanyahu government. Political reconciliation among Arab countries remains a necessary condition for a viable and credible regional economic cooperation.

LETTERS

Exposing impropriety

To the Editor:

AS A Palestinian who has worked all his life for a, hopefully, democratic Palestinian state, I was elated to see G.H. Jansen's article "Arafat's defeatist rule has made him become a national disgrace to his cause and his people" (Jordan Times, June 25, 1997) talking about Mr. Arafat impropriety.

At this stage, the infant Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has to set an example of proper and moral ruling process. To expose any immoral impropriety becomes of utmost importance at this point in time.

I cannot but salute the Jordan Times for exposing PNA officials' corruption, and I congratulate Mr. Jansen for bringing the matter to light, so as everybody can see what is going on.

Michael James Jaffer
msjaffa@link.com.jg

Where credit is due

To the Editor:

KEEP UP the good work on your Internet site. It is the only way that we in the U.S. have of getting news out of Palestine and Jordan. The media here simply refuse to cover it.

I write for a weekly paper and will try to include what I am learning off your site. I will, of course, give you proper credit as the source.

S. B. Cassidy,
rvmc@pachell.net

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

'The earliest Europeans were cannibals'

By David Keys

ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE discovered the oldest Europeans, dating back 800,000 years. But far from existing in a European Garden of Eden, they appear to have been cannibals.

The evidence from a cave in northern Spain shows that the six individuals, whose bones have been found so far, were eaten by their fellow humans. It is the earliest known example of cannibalism, and victims apparently selected as prey were easy targets — women and children.

Around 80 human bones and bone fragments from at least six individuals — two adult females and four children — have been unearthed and around half the bones had cut marks on them made by sharp stone tools.

Scattered around them was other food debris — the bones of horse, deer, bison, rhino and possibly elephant — and up to 100 stone implements, many of which would no doubt have been used to chop up both the animals and the humans. In some cases the bones had been broken open in order to extract the highly nutritious marrow.

The Spanish archaeologists who have found the remains — inside the entrance of a former cave at Atapuerca near Burgos, in northern Spain — believe that the six victims and presumably the cannibals themselves belong to a previously unknown human species which they have called Homo antecessor ("Ancestor Man").

In a scientific paper published in the American-based academic journal, Science, the Spanish team proposes that, in Europe,

the newly discovered species eventually evolved into Neanderthal man.

But they also believe that around one million years ago, Homo antecessor arrived in Europe from Africa (probably via the Middle East) and that those Homo antecessor humans who stayed in Africa eventually evolved into our species, Homo Sapiens.

According to the new theory, Ancestor Man is therefore the common ancestor of both ourselves and the Neanderthals, who became extinct around 30,000 years ago.

The discovery ties in with other evidence of human occupation in Europe and the Middle East: a 1.2 million year old bone from the Caucasus and tools from one million years ago in Israel and from around 800,000 years ago in Italy.

Similar 900,000-year-old tools have also been discovered in an even deeper excavation level at the Atapuerca.

There are controversial suggestions of possible tools from more than one million years ago in southern Spain.

Before the discovery of the Atapuerca cannibal victims, the oldest positively identified human bone ever found in Europe was a massive lower jaw found in Germany in 1907, and thought to date from



Flesh-eating ancestor. Man's 800,000-year-old teeth found in northern Spain

between 500,000 and 700,000 years.

The excavation is being directed by Dr. José María Bermúdez de Castro of Madrid's National Museum of Natural Sciences. Dr. Juan Luis Arsuaga of Madrid's Complutense University and Dr. Eudald Carbonell of Taragona University.

The Independent

Pain follows euphoria for companies in East Europe

LONDON (R) — The collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe sent Western-based multinationals stampeding into the region, but experts say many have been burned by Europe's emerging consumer markets.

Multinationals expected the rise of democracy in the early 1990s to bring them a business bonanza from a region long starved of international-quality consumer goods.

Companies manufacturing everything from toothpaste to cars to music CDs rushed into Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and neighbouring countries in hopes of boosting sales.

But a lot has changed in the last seven years. Some companies that rushed into the region have made money, while others have found doing business in Central and Eastern Europe a sobering if not painful experience.

It is easy to understand the initial hysteria. Companies making consumer-related goods like breakfast cereal or cosmetics or beer have been struggling for years to cope with little or no growth in their traditional markets in the United States and Western Europe.

Increasingly tough competition means there are too many companies fighting for the attention of too few shoppers. Some companies, like tobacco manufacturers, are caught in a worse situation, with traditional markets in the West shrinking rapidly.

For many consumer-related multinationals, the only way forward is to find new markets.

There was a rush into the market by European and U.S. multinationals. There was a new dawn in the consumer age in Eastern Europe, says Chris Gentle of the Henley Centre Research Group in London.

"There was pent-up demand and consumers in countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary

were not very sophisticated. They weren't used to choice. Anything that was Western was good," Mr. Gentle told Reuters.

That's what Mr. Gentle describes as "phase one" of the rush into Central and Eastern Europe — a euphoric period from 1989 to 1991. But reality set in with "phase two" — from 1993 to 1996 — when many companies learned painful lessons.

One problem was that, with an economic squeeze, many consumers couldn't afford internationally-branded products.

Piracy made it tough for companies in the music industry and other sectors to gain a share of the market, while a dilapidated infrastructure, unstable currencies and volatile tariff barriers also dampened foreign investors' enthusiasm.

Countries like Russia and Ukraine offer tantalizingly big populations for Western multinationals, but many companies have also found themselves blocked by mafia that control local distribution of consumer goods.

Finally, there's growing local competition. Manufacturers in Central and Eastern Europe have woken up to the new business opportunities and are snatching customers away from big foreign companies by improving quality and offering less expensive products.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Mr. Gentle from the Henley Centre, which is owned by WPP Group Plc, the world's biggest advertising and marketing services group, says phase three in Central and Eastern Europe holds new promise for the Western-based multinationals that have hung on.

He says a vibrant labour market of people under 30, some of whom work for foreign companies, and who represent the region's modern

consumer, has grown in the last couple of years. Multinationals are busy wooing these people.

For some companies a determined, yet gradual entry into Central and Eastern Europe has reaped benefits.

The worlds five biggest music companies — BMG, EMI, Polygram, Sony and Warner — have moved swiftly into the region and established full local affiliates in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Market Tracking International Ltd (MTI), a London-based market consultancy group, says the regions biggest music markets account for a mere 1.5 per cent of the global market, but they are growing fast.

The region is becoming increasingly important, with its rapidly growing music sector making up for stagnant sales in Western Europe, says a report MTI will publish in a few weeks about the music industry in Eastern Europe.

Chris Groner, who wrote the report, told Reuters none of the big music companies lost much money in the region because they had built up a local presence step by step in a way that allowed them to fix mistakes along the way.

Piracy has hurt the ability of Western music groups to build up market share rapidly, but Mr. Groner said the move into Eastern Europe was a clear necessity.

For the music industry, they have to be there. Sales in Western Europe have been stagnant for several years, so they have to move to emerging markets.

Companies have got to experiment. For the tobacco industry, hounded by court cases and growing restrictions on marketing in the West, the emerging markets of Central and Eastern Europe offer a win-win situation.

Companies like B.A.T., Philip Morris and Germany's Remytina have all made significant investments in Central and Eastern Europe too soon.

and Eastern Europe.

It has worked quite well for the tobacco industry and still is. They (big Western tobacco companies) have had and they will have a very significant impact on cigarette consumption there, says Don Hedley, a director of MTI.

Central and Eastern Europe represent the worlds second largest cigarette consumption region according to volume, after the Asia-Pacific region, MTI says in a different report.

The report says the region represents over 13 per cent of the world market for white stick cigarettes, with more than 690 billion cigarettes sold there each year.

Mr. Hedley said big Western tobacco companies initially entered the region by promoting international brands, but later shifted to an emphasis on local brands.

In some markets, there was a backlash against foreign brands, so they bought up local brands. That has enabled the multinationals to increase the share, he told Reuters.

As Western consumer-related companies rushed into Central and Eastern Europe, the global advertising agencies that they hire to promote their brands and market their goods followed closely behind.

Willott Kingston Smith, an accountancy firm specialising in communications companies, says several global advertising agency networks and public relations firms put lots of money into the region but some have found it a tough market.

There was quite a considerable commitment by ad agencies, but there is a lingering concern whether it really is going to work that quickly, he says. I do not expect them to do a wholesale retreat, but I think some went in too quickly.

Mr. Willott says some clients dragged their advertising agencies into Central and Eastern Europe too soon.

Career Opportunities in Saudi Arabia

Al-Jeel Medical, a leading company in Sales & Services of Medical, Dental, Laboratory Equipment & Supplies, announces job openings for long term career seekers as Specialized Sales Representatives & Sales Managers:

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- 1B- Endoscopy equipment & Supplies.
- 1C- Radiology equipment.
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5- Pharmaceutical Products:

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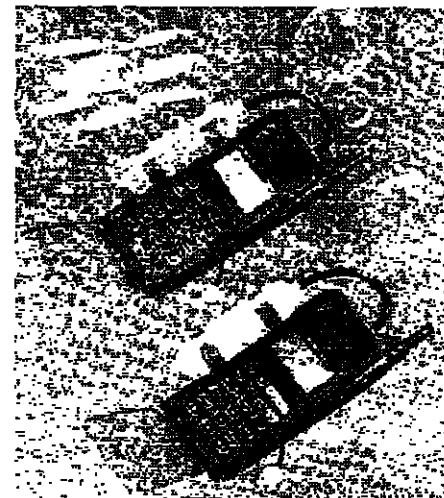
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مركز خدمة العملاء

Jordan prepares to ask international firms for detailed viability study on Aqaba free zone

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government will invite international firms to bid for a tender to conduct a feasibility study on converting the southern port of Aqaba into a free zone by the end of this year, Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs Jawad Anani said Saturday.

Dr. Anani told reporters following the weekly cabinet session that the study would include the economic viability of the multi-billion dollar project to ensure the maximum benefit to the Kingdom.

He added the study would also analyse the "impact of this project on the Kingdom's budget in terms of expenditure the treasury is expected to shoulder as a result of granting exemptions to many firms."

"The study will emphasise the necessary legislation to facilitate the project quest to attract foreign investments to the Kingdom and to adopt necessary customs and security measures to prevent smuggling from the free zone to inside Jordan," Dr. Anani said.

He said the study will be ready by August, to enable

the Kingdom to promote and market these projects at the Middle East and North Africa Summit, which is scheduled to take place in Qatar in November.

He said projects include railway, tourism and expanding the industrial area as well as the Aqaba port, electricity facilities and nearby roads.

He said that among the "huge projects that will soon be launched in Aqaba is the \$600 million phosphate project in the industrial area in cooperation with the Norwegian firm MPK."

"This zone will be isolated from the Kingdom. The management of this area will be given to a Jordanian party. The zone will have its own rules in order to attract foreign investments and facilitate them," said Dr. Anani adding that by the "end of this year Aqaba would be declared a free zone."

Reuters said the Kingdom has short-listed six international firms to submit proposals on optimal ways of converting the port city.

The envisaged free trade area space will cover 23 square kilometres. The port city of Aqaba, now a major conduit for Iraq trade, is

also a base for Jordan's expanding downstream fertiliser industry.

Foreign currency reserves reach \$1 billion

Dr. Anani said the Kingdom has succeeded in raising the foreign currency reserves in Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) from \$950 million in May to almost \$1 billion by the end of this month.

"Our monetary policy to safeguard and increase the foreign reserves is good, fruitful and proved its usefulness despite doubts that this policy might affect the size of the Jordanian dinar's liquidity in the market," Dr. Anani said.

"This policy will grant stability to the economy and enhance foreign investors' confidence in the Kingdom's economy," he said.

The minister said the rise in the CBJ's foreign reserves was due to the increase in the volume of national exports and foreign loans the government managed to obtain.

During the cabinet session, Dr. Anani said the government approved the Jordan-Egypt electric

power grid link project.

He said the cabinet has agreed to authorise the Jordan Electricity Company to borrow JD15 million from the Social Security Corporation and other institutions in the Kingdom to finance its different projects.

Israeli pretexts unacceptable

Dr. Anani lashed out at Israel's policy to hinder the flow of goods from Jordan to the Palestinian self-rule territories as well as to Israel and said Israel's excuses were unconvincing.

"What Israel is claiming is that there are security reasons that impede free trade. This is not acceptable because these are security pretexts to achieve economic gains," he said.

"Israel has not opened its gates to our goods, and it claims that it has eased the procedures relating to transportation and security checking of goods," he said.

"We do not accept this and we can reciprocate with very tight arrangements," Dr. Anani warned.

Israel's strong economy prevents Mideast common market, Egyptian official says

CAIRO (R) — A senior Egyptian official said in remarks published Saturday that a Middle Eastern common market including Israel would not be established even if the Jewish state finalises peace accords with its Arab neighbours.

Assistant Foreign Minister Raouf Saad told the government-owned Al Ahram newspaper that Israel's strong economy and not its politics prevented the com-

mon market, an idea born of earlier progress in the Middle East peace process, from seeing the light.

"There is no scope for talking about Middle Eastern economic cooperation which includes Israel. Even if there is peace, this issue is not on the agenda," Mr. Saad said.

"The numbers show that the Israeli economy is relatively large compared to the Middle Eastern and North

African states...Israel will gain much more from such an economic grouping than the Arabs," he indicated.

"Israeli per capita income is comparable to incomes in the developed world and its gross domestic product makes up 16 per cent of the total domestic product of the Arab World. If a common market is set up then it will become nothing but a market for Israeli goods and services," he emphasised.

But analysts say the current state of Arab-Israeli relations has put a damper on the common market idea and on normal trade ties with the Jewish state.

Mr. Saad said that an Arab common market was a more viable option. On Thursday, the foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria and six Gulf Arab states said they would set up an economic bloc, expected to begin as a free-trade zone.

UAE to enforce private sector pensions soon

DUBAI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Labour and Social Affairs Minister Matar Humaid Al Tayar said a law forcing private companies to pay pensions to employees would come into effect soon.

"The cabinet has recently instructed the ministry of finance to study the law and enforce it. This law would make it mandatory for all private com-

panies to pay social security for its employees," he was quoted by the Khaleej Times as saying.

He said this would encourage UAE nationals to work in the private sector as UAE laws currently require that only public sector employees be paid pensions. Mr. Tayar was also quoted by newspapers as saying the ministry would not set a quota for employing UAE nationals in

the private sector but it would nominate unemployed UAE nationals to posts offered by private firms.

Asked by the Khaleej Times if the ministry would set a law forcing private firms to employ UAE nationals, Mr. Tayar said: "I will not encourage this myself."

However, he said, the ministry would check its databank

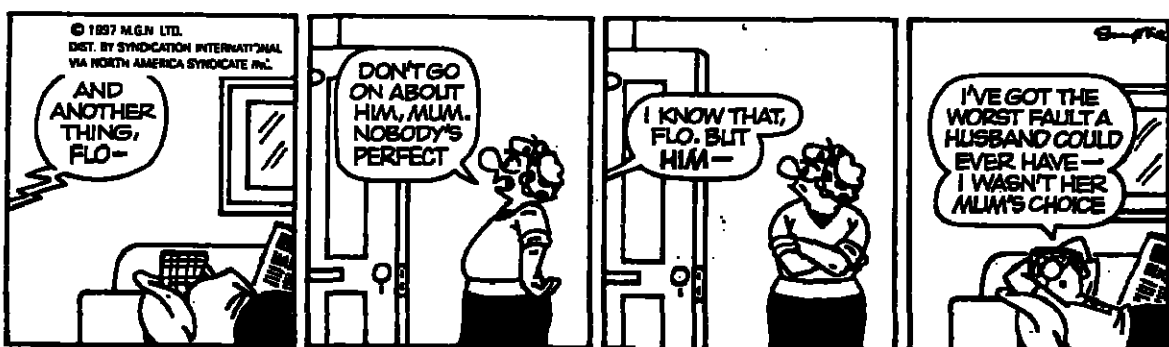
of unemployed UAE nationals when it studies employment visa applications from companies for foreign workers.

"The priority will be given to nationals if the required qualified staff is available among the locals listed with us. In this case, we will nominate the most suitable person and recommend the company to interview him or her," he said.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 28/06/97 12:50									
Currency	US\$	DM	£	¥	₹	₪	₦	₧	₪
US Dollar	1.2415	0.8913	1.4850	114.85	1.3820	1700.00	1.3588	8.8679	
DE Mark	0.8722	1.0000	0.3364	65.54	0.7851	978.61	1.1507	3.3683	
GB Sterling	1.4850	2.4800	1.0000	193.46	2.2963	2827.10	3.2575	9.7588	
CH Franc	0.8452	1.0000	0.7228	73.82	0.9462	1167.88	1.3488	4.0286	
JP Yen	0.0087	0.0060	0.0072	1.00	1.2623	147.9	1.7040	5.1040	
CA Dollar	0.7228	0.5253	0.5304	1.0310	1.20	1298.88	1.3889	4.1676	
IT Lira	0.0006	0.0004	0.0005	1481.92	0.8127		11.82	3.4502	
NL Guilder	0.0020	0.0014	0.0016	36.36	0.7062	867.44		2.9837	
FR Franc	0.1704	0.2907	0.1024	24.7913	19.56	0.2355	33.38	33.3800	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	US\$	DM	£	¥	₹	₪	₦	₧	₪
US Dollar	0.7080	0.5704	0.3770	3.6398	0.3022	3.6729	1538.80	3.3838	
Jordan Dinar	0.7080	0.5704	0.3770	3.6398	0.3022	3.6729	1538.80	3.3838	
GB Sterling	0.2889	0.1888	0.1267	0.5110	0.4268	5.1877	2188.29	4.7822	
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1666	0.1100	0.87	0.0806	0.98	408.42	0.9047	
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	0.1304	1.0304	0.0830	1.01	421.88	0.9322	
Kuwait Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	0.1304	1.0304	0.0830	1.01	421.88	0.9322	
Emirates Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	0.1304	1.0304	0.0830	1.01	421.88	0.9322	
Lebanese Lira	0.0011	0.0008	0.0009	2.2425	0.3455	2.3704	0.1968	0.2352	
Egyptian	0.0247	0.0247	0.0111	1.0727	0.0891	1.0825	302.35		

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	US\$	DM	£	¥	₹	₪	₦	₧	₪
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.1666	0.1100	0.87	0.0806	0.98	408.42	0.9047	
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.1948	0.1304	1.0304	0.0830	1.01	421.88	0.9322	
KW Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	0.1304	1.0304	0.0830	1.01	421.88	0.9322	
BH Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	0.1304	1.0304	0.0830	1.01	421.88	0.9322	
CY Pound	1.3547	3.3893	1.0000	1.9346	2.2963	2827.10	3.2575	9.7588	

Metal Prices			Currency Deposit Rates (%)					
Commodity	Unit	Price	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months
Gold (100g)	335	335.5	USD	5.51	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
Silver (100g)	421	421.7	GBP	5.45	5.45	5.45	5.45	5.45
Platinum (100g)	419	422	JPY	0.44	0.40	0.37	0.33	0.30
Oil (1 Month)	16.45	16.76	DEM	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
CU (3 Months)	2416	2421	FRF	3.23	3.27	3.27	3.27	3.21
Zinc (3 Months)	1435	1438	CHF	5.10	5.10	5.10	5.10	5.10
Lead (3 Months)	628	628	ITL	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.77
Al (3 Months)	6585	6585						

Currency Deposit Rates (%)									
Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	Currency	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
USD	5.81	5.80	5.80	5.80	GBP	6.45	6.45	6.45	6.45
JPY	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.44	DEM	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25
FRF	3.23	3.23	3.23	3.23	CHF	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75
ITL	6.77	6.77	6.77	6.77					

Energy		
Commodity	Price	Unit
Coffee (c/bn)	155.57	Spot
Cocoa (c/bn)	1888	Spot
Sugar (c/bn)	325.5	Spot
Wheat (c/bn)	240.5	Spot
Soya (c/bn)	22.2	Spot
Tea (c/bn)	103	Spot
Banley (c/bn)	0	Spot
Rice (c/bn)	450	Spot

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Rate	Unit
US Dollar	0.708	0.719
Switzerland	0.708	0.719
DE Mark	0.708	0.719
FR Franc	0.708	0.719
JP Yen	0.708	0.719
NL Guilder	0.708	0.719
AUS Lira	0.708	0.719

Source: Central Bank of Jordan

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Commodity
- Israeli Eban
- Resource
- avis
- Roll up
- Orca
- Came to earth
- In good condition
- Vernacular
- David's dwelling?
- Architect
- Saarin
- Electric unit
- Contempt
- Fodder tower
- Continuous action: abbr.
- Coat of mail: Brit.
- Funny Fox
- Govt. gp.
- Oprah's spectacles?
- Yalie
- Uniform
- Domain
- Pine board
- Had debts
- Zones
- Wapiti
- Cereal grass
- Dan's temperature taker
- Devilish
- Roof overhang
- Fanaticism
- Pointed arches
- Prayer under
- Therefore
- Aquarium fish
- Role
- Pitcher Nolan

by Eugene Puffenberger

Saturday's Puzzle solved:

LASS	NOLAR	FAST	10 Prawn	59 Spooky
UTAH	ARENA	OLLA	11 Palm starch	60 Hindu music
GAGA	GIANT	RIAS	12 NC college	61 Witty remark
GENEVA	AGENT		13 Asian holiday	64 Actor Chaney
DAM	MOLE	TWENTY	21 Term	
UNEVEN	SLEET		22 Head	
METER	SPAR	MUG	25 - wood (snored)	
PARTY	SPOON	HOUSE	26 Noted US surgeon	
SRO	WITS	ENSURE	27 "vincit amor"	
BETRAY	UNTO	DYE	29 Dunne or Papes	
APHID	SPORTY		30 Lower limb	
GORE	OMBRE	ARID	32 O'Donnell	
EDEN	REAMS	WIRE	33 Musical drama	
LEWD	BEGAT	POKY	34 Crates	
			36 Abrogate	
			38 Ham	
			41 Evergreen tree	
			42 Certain wine drink	
			47 Epistle	
			49 Hardman	
			52 Tibetan capital	
			54 Flower cluster	
			55 Frenzy	
			56 Dill herb, old style	
			57 Harvest	
			58 "Remember"	

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HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You will be rich with many bright ideas today, so don't hesitate to follow your intuition. Avoid a disagreement with your mate or you both might say some things which you both regret in the heat of the moment.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This would be a good evening to invite some interesting friends into your home, however, make sure conditions there are suitable, so that everyone will feel welcome and you will be the perfect host of this get together.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your ability to communicate your ideas to others is especially keen at this time, so contact as many fellow business associates as possible and thereby make the proper connection which can be beneficial.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Your memory is not up to par at this time, so write down any ideas which occur to you which may be helpful in business activities during the week. Later this evening you can get together with close friends for some fun.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Your judgement will be very good all day today, so focus your attention on getting all of your personal and business affairs in order, thereby can be quite successful. This evening will be good for staying home with your loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Try to put a bit more romance in your relationship with your mate today, and the situation at home will improve greatly as a result. Later this evening will be a good time to seek out fellow associates and labour on a new project.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You will have an opportunity to turn some acquaintances today into fast friends, so be sure to do this. Be very careful while driving on the highway later this evening so that you avoid getting into a difficult situation.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a fine day today for going out and making some fine visits to see close friends. Look for persons in positions of power later this evening who can help your career situation for the better and thereby be more successful.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you come to a confusing fork in the road today, you would be wise to follow your hunches. This should be a great day and evening for spending quality time with close friends and loved ones so make the effort.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Think over any promises you have made today, and be sure you are able to keep them, thereby you can retain your good reputation. Try to labour more harmoniously with your mate and show that you truly do appreciate him or her.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Stick to conventional, proven methods of operation today, or you won't get anything at all accomplished. Be wary when signing any contracts that you read the fine print to avoid any disagreements in the interpretation.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) If you have some extra time today, this would be a good time to handle any little chores around the house which you have been putting off. Later this evening will be a good time to go out on recreational activities with friends.

Birthstone of June: Pearl — Moon Stone

Europe's pension funds should mature in youthful economies

PARIS (AFP) — European countries which face a looming crisis in providing for their elderly could ease the problem by investing pension funds in emerging Asian economies, leading economists told an international conference here.

Norbert Walter, chief economist of Germany's Deutsche Bank, argued that the burgeoning Asian economies could provide a "breathing space" for fund managers looking after the pensions of Europe's increasingly elderly population.

However, he warned that they too would face their own difficulties in the next century. Japan, he said, was already

"greying," while China's elderly will present "dramatic problems" in around 15 years time.

Mr. Walter also emphasised that "capital tends to go where political risks are smaller," although the financial returns may well be higher.

By way of remedy, he called on "the United States or the United Nations to help to provide good governance in the part of the world which has potentially a high rate of capital productivity."

His speech came on the second and final day of an international conference here organised by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Development Centre and the

Asian Development Bank on the joint theme of Asia and world trade to 2020 and pension fund diversification and Asia's emerging markets.

Referring to state pension schemes like those operating in France, Germany and Italy, he charged "critics of pay as you go" are damned right," adding that young people are the "victims, not the beneficiaries."

But he said he was "pretty sure" the transition to privately-funded systems in such countries would be a very slow process.

Meanwhile, Mr. Walter also called on Europe to develop the idea of the three generation family, with the younger third

supporting the elder, and backed the Chinese move to subsidise housing only for three-generation families.

Also among the 300 ministers, bankers, economists and diplomats from around 20 European and Asian attending the conference at the French finance ministry was Roberto de Ocampo, Philippines finance minister.

He concluded that "the central challenge is for us to strike a balance between conservatism and diversification (into emerging markets)."

Arguing the Philippines had progressed from a condition of being "the sick man of Asia" to "what many consider as

Asia's emerging tiger," he urged it was "essential to strengthen domestic capital base" in emerging markets, and added that "one strategic feature of domestic capital market development is pension funds."

He also called for "the private sector to participate more actively in the pension fund system."

And he added that the Philippines was examining the success of Chile in privatising its pension fund system to see whether it was applicable in the Philippines.

Puzushottam Kakodkar, former president of the State Bank of India, conceded that pension funds were "conspicuous by their absence during the

early phases of liberalisation in the emerging markets."

However, he argued that with "the settling down of reforms ... risks are manageable and the returns are still relatively high."

French treasury official Francis Mayer, inaugurating the conference, also acknowledged: "This increase in power in Asia is, of course, a fantastic opportunity for the world economy."

But calling on the "international financial community" to minimise the risks, the assistant secretary for international affairs warned: "It can also mean, at least initially, financial and banking fragility."

Saudi utilities face problem: luring private cash

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia, trying to curb state spending and shying away from sovereign borrowing, is asking its public utilities increasingly to get banks to help finance the infrastructure projects it needs to meet fast-growing demand.

The private sector is also being asked to take a role in providing and funding public services, as the world's biggest oil producer suffers its 14th year with a budget deficit.

But bankers and economists said losses made by power and water companies in the heavily subsidised sector made raising finance and attracting private funds very difficult.

"No-one is going to lend money to a financially insolvent company," said Amman Ahmad of the Consulting Centre for Finance and Investment think-tank. Speaking by telephone from Riyadh, he said the private sector would only be willing to invest in commercially viable firms, unlike the main Saudi power firms.

But the success of the Ghazlan loan — which is at 90 basis points over LIBOR — is unlikely to be repeated, analysts say.

"Ghazlan is unique because it is backed up by state oil firm Saudi Aramco. Aramco has not given a guarantee but the loan is underpinned by Aramco's receivables, so you are assured of repayment," said a corporate finance manager at a Saudi bank.

"You will see that few banks are willing to lend to firms like SCECO. West because they have not met their obligations on time," he said.

SCECO's West plans the Shuabha Power Plant, estimated to cost \$2 billion, with over 1,700 MW of capacity.

Even if Saudi banks wanted to expose to the sector, they would only be able to lend about five to six billion dollars, SCECO's manager said. A year due to a central bank limit on loans at 10 per cent of deposits, which banks have already almost reached.

International banks would be even less willing to lend given the commercial non-viability and technical bankruptcy of many Saudi power companies, analysts said, leaving the option to independent power projects (IPPs).

But before these became attractive, they said Saudi Arabia would have to clear a number of issues, including giving a commitment to private ownership, setting up a realistic tariff structure, agreeing fuel supply deals with private operators and shortening various government approval processes.

"IPPs represent one of the biggest potentials for private sector involvement in power generation. If the political will is there to structure the arrangements, the funds and players will be forthcoming," Mr. Ahmad said.

If it goes ahead as scheduled, the Shuabha plant will be one of the kingdom's first set up on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis.

Similarly, utility expansion in Jubail and Yanbu industrial cities is expected to be on a build-lease-transfer basis. A utility firm with private and foreign participation is already being set up to provide equity and raise finance

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Israelis invest \$20m in textile joint ventures with Jordanians

THE RELATIVE advantages of the investment climate in Jordan and the cheap labour have been a major incentive for many Israeli clothing firms to come to Jordan and set up joint industrial projects, Planning Secretary General Nabil Ammari said in a lecture.

Dr. Ammari indicated that there has been a "big jump" in applications submitted by Israeli clothing industries to set up joint ventures.

The secretary general did not identify the firms nor did he estimate the expected investment but he said that the joint projects provided between 6,000 and 10,000 job opportunities for Jordanian workers.

"Israeli clothing industries provide the necessary raw material supplies to Jordan where it is manufactured and later, exported to the United States," Dr. Ammari explained. He said that the U.S. has accepted to import all the output of the clothing firms.

Meanwhile, latest reliable figures issued by the Israeli embassy in Amman show that the volume of Israeli investments in the joint ventures has amounted to about \$20 million during the past three years. Most of the investments went into the clothing sector.

According to the embassy, Jordan exports to Israel during the second half of 1996 amounted to \$5.75 million. Clothing accounted for most of the exports (Al Aswaq).

Only 18 tourism offices attract majority of foreign tourists

THE MINISTER of tourism has decided to stop issuing new licences for travel and tourism offices and limited approvals only to highly-capitalised tourist offices capable of attracting foreign tourism.

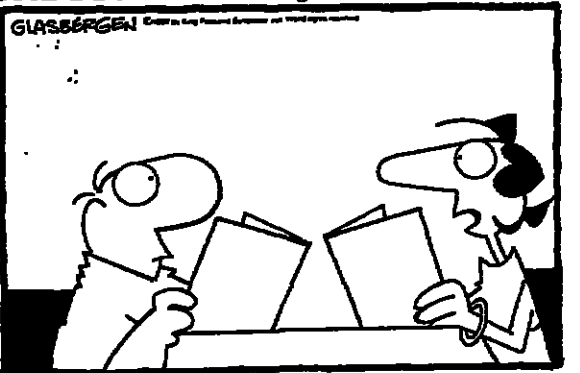
He indicated that the Jordanian tourism market has no room for more small travel and tourism offices. The minister pointed out that only 18 tourism offices are attracting about 70 per cent of incoming tourism.

The minister highlighted the role of tourism in the economy by stressing that it accounts for 37 per cent of Jordan's total export earnings and 11 per cent of the gross domestic product.

He said that one room at a three, four or five star hotel provides between half and one direct employment opportunity and secures six indirect jobs for each room.

The tourism minister said that special terms and criteria will be applied to license tourism offices (Al Aswaq).

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"This is a real restaurant, Stanley. Don't ask them if they can 'supersize' your filet mignon for an extra 29 cents!"

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

SYLOU
SYASA
CUSPER
CONTOY

Print answer here: A

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's Jumbles: LIMIT FUROR SHEKEL PACKET
Answer: The result of photographing a lightning bolt - A FLASH PICTURE

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHAMSANI											
TELEPHONE: 807171 / 807179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 28/06/1997											
DATE 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADING	VALUE TRADED	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
269.022	111.050	ARAB BANK	11.9	1.55	5	2060	531.300	257.23	258.22	1.00	
2.344	0.00	JOR. ELECTRICITY	8.0	0.00	10	4475	2445	2.13	2.21	.08	
3.672	2.765	BAJAJ OF JORDAN	6.9	0.00	13	4940	162.73	3.42	3.29	-.13	
1.210	.885	MID. EAST INV. CO.	62.8	0.00	5	900	856	.06	.06	.00	
2.232	4.150	THE HOLDING CO.	14.6	0.00	4	521	2536	4.31	4.87	.56	
4.185	2.443	JOR. MINING BANK	14.1	0.00	39	10700	428.76	4.18	3.97	-.21	
1.250	.880	JOR. DEPT. BANK	5.2	0.00	11	15407	1356	.12	.08	-.04	
4.056	3.480	JOR. SECURITIES BANK	14.8	0.00	2	250	911	3.66	3.64	-.02	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 198.50 CHG: -0.10											
2.470	2.250	GENERAL ARAB BANK	13.2	7.58	2	500	1232	2.20	2.20	.00	
4.550	4.000	JERUSALEM BANK	10.3	5.26	1	200	786	4.20	3.82	-.38	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 111.99 CHG: -0.54											
1.820	1.460	JOR. ELECTRICITY	8.0	6.06	8	3820	6303	1.67	1.65	-.02	
1.540	1.320	JOR. INSURANCE	8.2	8.23	2	1100	1518	1.38	1.38	.00	
1.380	.850	JOR. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	17	8300	10382	1.26	1.27	.01	
7.570	3.900	AD-VESTORS	25.4	3.38	1	200	1250	6.00	6.25	.25	
1.910	1.170	MID. EAST INV. CO.	20.1	0.00	1	150	447	2.82	2.98	.16	
3.720	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. CO.	7.8	0.00	1	500	489	.97	.97	.00	
1.210	.960	SAKKA EDUCATION	8.1	0.00	1	500	4705	1.11	1.70	.59	
2.230	1.630	CHIEF CO.	6.17	0.00	2	250	207	.68	.69	.01	
2.010	.640	CHIEF LAND DEV.	9	0.00	2	250	207	.68	.69	.01	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 109.15 CHG: -0.09											
1.250	.930	ATCARRERS	9	0.00	5	8290	8514	1.03	1.03	.00	
4.450	3.040	JOR. CENTRAL FACT.	27.6	4.48	39	9489	38986	4.07	4.10	.03	
4.140	2.710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	11.0	2.53	6	31250	123438	3.90	3.95	.05	
7.050	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.6	2.99	13	8700	7870	6.74	6.70	-.04	
10.250	6.720	PERIODIC REFILLARY	9.6	0.00	14	1900	18790	9.92	9.90	-.02	
3.240	1.650	INDUSTRIAL CORP. AGR.	9	0.00	1	200	384	1.93	1.92	-.01	
4.000	3.040	ARAB PHOSPH. MIN.	10.5	5.34	6	924	3524	3.85	3.82	-.03	
4.250	5.450	JOR. CHEMICAL IND.	6.7	3.05	1	1000	6550	6.70	6.55	-.15	
2.570	2.050	JORDAN DAIRY	8.0	10.36	1	400	944	2.32	2.36	.04	
3.610	2.750	JOR. PAPER CARBON	15.2	0.00	1	350	945	2.75	2.70	-.05	
5.650	4.250	JOR. ALUMINA DIV. IND.	13.8	4.43	10	3142	17459	5.61	5.64	.03	
.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.9	0.00	12	11200	5264	.47	.47	.00	
1.520	1.010	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	16.2	0.00	4	750	443	.59	.59	.00	
1.330	.980	JERUSALEM PETRO. CO.	9	0.00	2	1400	812	.61	.58	-.03	
1.090	.580	JOR. ROADS & BRIDGES	5.16	0.00	3	225	405	1.90	1.80	-.10	
2.980	.800	INDV. CHEM. IND.	24.6	2.73	1	500	2195	4.29	4.39	.10	
4.240	3.430	ARAB PHOSPH. CO.	17.4	5.10	1	50	50	2.40	.38	-.01	
.950	.550	JOR. SULPHUR CO.	17.4	0.00	9	8600	5014	.59	.58	-.01	
1.470	.130	ARAB PHOSPH. CO.	17.4	0.00	1	50	50	2.40	.38	-.01	
2.210	1.280	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	15.2	0.00	6	12600	16154	1.28	1.28	.00	
1.520	1.120	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	15.2	0.00	6	2719	2071	1.12	1.13	.01	
1.400	1.020	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	13.7	0.00	6	6000	8700	1.45	1.45	.00	
2.090	1.440	EL-SAY READY WEAR	51.0	0.00	4	1239	1795	1.45	1.45	.00	
1.330	1.080	JOR. TOBACCO	6.2	0.00	4	1094	1234	1.13	1.13	.00	
1.240	.850	INDV. CHEM. & PET.	39.6	0.00	4	1100	957	.89	.87	-.02	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 128.30 CHG: -0.02											
160.82	160.82	CHG: -0.07	102	256229	1320695						
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 160.82 CHG: -0.07											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 28/06/1997											
.640	.350	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	0	0.00	1	100	38	.38	.38	.00	
.670	.410	JOR. TRUCKS	12.3	0.00	2	1700	782	.46	.46	.00	
.840	.660	UNION INV. CO.	0	0.00	4	3742	635	.67	.67	.00	
.660	.370	ARAB FIB. INVEST.	0	0.00	10	7600	3716	.60	.60	.00	
.950	.610	AL-JERUSALEM TR.	60.5	0.00	11	17533	6662	.62	.63	.01	
.510	.200	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	0	0.00	15	16350	4251	.26	.26	.00	
.730	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	0	0.00	6	1030	1005	.55	.55	.00	
.720	.460	JOR. TEXTILE	0	0.00	4	2000	940	.50	.47	-.03	
.750	.400	JOR. MTL. IND. MANUFACT.	32.5	0.00	33	59800	34757	.62	.58	-.02	
.850	.720	JOR. MTL. IND. MANUFACT.	32.5	0.00	1	100	148	.74	.74	.00	
.720	.400	NAT. SECUR. FUND	757	0.00	5	4250	1539	.62	.61	-.01	
1.230	.850	UNION TOBACCO 757	22.8	0.00	2	500	325	.50	.50	.00	
.600	.370	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	13.7	0.00	4	4250	1580	.90	.87	-.03	
1.000	.810	NAT. ALUMINUM 757	0	0.00	10	9400	5170	.81	.80	-.01	
.870	.530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	8.0	15.38	8	4850	3153	.55	.65	.10	
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 160.82 CHG: -0.07											
116	134405	64766									

1: New 12 months high
2: New 12 months low
3: Listed during the past 12 months
P: P/E ratio is 100 or more
N: Negative P/E
X: Varying 16 zero or N/A for the most recent year

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Brazil bid for historic Copa win at high altitude

LA PAZ (R) — Brazil will attempt to win the Copa America on foreign soil for the first time on Sunday when they face hosts Bolivia in the final at 3,600 metres above sea level.

Surprisingly, given their superiority over most other South American teams, the Brazilians have won the prestigious title just four times and all have been at home, the last in 1989. Overcoming the physical difficulties of playing at high altitude in La Paz will not be easy for the Brazilians. They may face the game without striker Romario, who is nursing a thigh injury. But coach Mario Zagallo tried to play down the worries following his team's 7-0 demolition of Peru in Thursday's semifinal.

"Our opponents on Sunday will be Bolivia, not the altitude," he said. "The altitude is there, it always has been."

He went on to refer to his own playing days.

"In 1964, I went there with Botafogo. I played 90 minutes. You notice a bit of a difference but you can play perfectly well," he said. "We knew from the start that if we reached the final and the final was against Bolivia, we would have to go there. I'm not here to complain."

The history of Brazil-Bolivia encounters can be divided into two sections — matches played at sea level and matches played higher up.

Bolivia have never recorded a win in the former category and have suffered some severe thrashings, conceding eight goals on two occasions.

Matches in La Paz have been much closer, although Brazil still won there in a World Cup qualifier in 1981, prevailing 2-1.

Brazil's problems may be partly psychological since they suffered their first and only defeat in a World Cup qualifier on their last visit to La Paz four years ago. Bolivia's only previous Copa America title was in 1963, the only other time that they have staged the competition. They beat Brazil 4-3 on the way.

A Bolivia-Brazil final has seemed on the cards since the tournament started, not only because of the form of both teams.

The two countries have



Brazilian star striker Ronaldo (L) reacts after taking a shot at the basket as fellow team-mate Leonardo looks on during an informal training session. Brazil travel to La Paz on June 29 to face Bolivia in the final of the Copa America South American soccer championships (Reuters photo).

enjoyed certain privileges. Bolivia have been allowed to play all their home games in their high-altitude fortress against opponents who have never had more than 72 hours to adapt to the conditions. This contradicts the policy of world soccer's governing body FIFA, which allows visiting teams 10 days to acclimatise before World Cup qualifiers in the city. While Bolivia have won all their games in the Copa, they have won only three out of seven World Cup qualifiers in La Paz and have drawn four.

During the first round, the Copa America organisers

even announced a change to the rules which would have allowed Bolivia to continue playing in La Paz if they finished second in their first-round group rather than first, as had been expected.

This prompted Argentina, who would have been Bolivia's quarter-final opponents if they had finished second, to threaten a walk-out. This was averted when Bolivia won their group.

Brazil, meanwhile, have played all their games in the eastern city of Santa Cruz, which is almost at sea level.

Brazilian striker Romario, who has scored three goals,

may have to miss the final after limping off with a pulled hamstring on Thursday.

Zagallo announced that if Romario could not play, Vasco Da Gama striker Edmundo would take his place. Otherwise, no changes are likely to the team which demolished Peru.

The world champions have changed their style of playing during the competition and the defence, which looked wobbly in their first two games, has not conceded a goal for 3-1/2 matches.

Their attack has looked lethal throughout, scoring 18 times in five games.

UEFA upholds Fiorentina ban

GENEVA (R) — Fiorentina had their appeal against a two-match home ban turned down by UEFA on Friday but had suspensions to two players reduced.

Fiorentina had been ordered to play their next two European matches 500 kms from Florence following disturbances when they played Barcelona in the second leg of their European Cup Winners' Cup semifinal second leg on April 24.

Barcelona coach Bobby Robson was hit by a bottle while players Sergi Barjuan and Ivan De La Pena were hit by other objects thrown by Fiorentina fans.

UEFA's control and disciplinary committee reduced the suspension of Fiorentina's Portuguese captain Rui Costa for insulting the referee from four games to three and that of his Swedish team mate Stefan Schwarz from three to one.

UEFA also reduced a fine on Porto from 100,000 Swiss Francs (\$69,700) to 30,000. The fine was imposed because of crowd disturbances at the Portuguese club's European Cup quarter-final second leg against England's Manchester United in Oporto on March 19.

'Inter sign Atletico's Simeone'

MILAN (R) — Italian club internazionale have signed Argentine midfielder Diego Simeone from Atletico Madrid, newspapers reported on Saturday.

Inter paid the Spanish club 13 billion lire (\$7.6 million) for Simeone, who signed a four-year contract to earn three billion lire a year (\$1.75 million), Gazzetta Dello Sport newspaper reported.

It said the deal was signed by the player's agent, Marco Franchi, with Inter officials late on Friday in Milan.

"I'm happy about this deal. I had said I would only leave Atletico Madrid for a big Italian club," Gazzetta quoted Simeone as saying from Argentina, where he is on holiday.

"Inter has winning potential. And that's why I had no doubts," he added.

Simeone, who won the Spanish league title with the Madrid club, is seen as a replacement for England midfielder Paul Ince, who appears likely to leave Inter to return to Britain.

Gazzetta quoted Ince as saying inter had allowed him to negotiate with any Premier League sides interested in signing him, adding that Newcastle and Liverpool were the most probable destinations.

Jays edge Orioles as Alomar blunders on basepath

BALTIMORE (R) — Ed Sprague and Orlando Merced each knocked in their 33rd runs of the season as the Toronto Blue Jays edged the Baltimore Orioles 2-1, thanks in part to a ninth-inning baserunning blunder by Roberto Alomar.

Toronto starter Robert Person (3-5) allowed one run over 7 2/3 innings. He retired the first 12 batters of the game before Cal Ripken singled leading off the fifth. Person gave up three hits, struck out three and walked one, winning for the third time in four starts.

In the ninth, with one out, Alomar and Ripken singled to put men on first and second. B.J. Surhoff flied out to right and Alomar tried to take third but Orlando Merced threw him out easily, ending the game.

"I was surprised Robbie took off, but I was playing deep and was throwing to third base regardless," Merced said. "No, I didn't have time to think about whether he might run or not. Just catch the ball, get set and throw it. Throwing a guy out always makes you feel good."

"I think the big play, the last play, I should have stayed at second base," Alomar said. "It was a mistake of mine of making the third out at third base knowing that Orlando merced has a good arm. But that's part of baseball. I think I'll learn from the mistake and I learned something today."

Scott Kamieniecki (6-4) had his two-game winning streak snapped, allowing both runs and five hits over seven innings.

At Minnesota, Albert Belle went 5-for-5 with two RBI and four runs scored and Jorge Fabregas had three hits, and four RBI, as the Chicago White Sox won

their seventh straight, 10-6 over the twins.

Belle, 11-for-22 in his last five games, had three singles, a double and a solo homer for his first career five-hit game. Fabregas tied career highs in hits and RBI, helping Chicago climb within one game of first-place Cleveland in the American League Central.

Belle, who raised his average from .283 to .295, has 55 RBI in his last 56 games.

Ron Coomer hit two homers for the twins, who have lost five of their last six.

In Seattle, Alex Rodriguez returned to the lineup and hit a two-run homer in his first at-bat and Jeff Fassero allowed one run over seven innings to lead the Mariners to their eighth win in nine games, 8-1 over the Anaheim Angels.

Rodriguez, activated from the 15-day disabled list before the game, extended his hitting streak to 10 games. The 21-year-old shortstop missed 14 games after bruising his chest on June 11.

Fassero (8-3) won for the fourth time in his last five decisions. Scott Sanders pitched two hitless innings.

Chuck Finley (3-6) took the loss.

The Mariners moved 5 1/2 games ahead of Anaheim atop the A.L. West for the largest lead in franchise history.

In Oakland, Rafael Botinhal went 3-for-3 and Matt Stairs and Jose Canseco drove in two runs apiece as the Athletics beat the Texas Rangers 7-4 for their third win in four games.

Botinhal posted his fourth straight multi-hit game, has 12 hits in his last 15 at-bats and is, batting .640 (16-for-25), during a

seven-game hitting streak. Ivan Rodriguez had four hits, including his 10th homer, and two RBI for the Rangers, who have lost nine of their last 10 games and fell eight games behind Seattle.

In Kansas City, Jay Bell hit a grand slam and Craig Paquette also drove in five runs as the Royals bombed the Milwaukee Brewers 16-3.

Paquette homered twice as the Royals racked up 15 hits and a season high in runs.

Kevin Appier (6-5) allowed an unearned run in six innings as Kansas City won its fifth in six games.

Ben McDonald (6-5) was rocked for a career-high nine earned runs and eight hits over three-plus innings.

In New York, Dwight Gooden allowed one run in seven innings and Paul O'Neill had a two-run double in a three-run first as the Yankees won their fourth straight, 3-2 over the Cleveland Indians.

Gooden (3-0) scattered five hits without a walk and struck out four. He is 4-0 in as many starts against the tribe.

Mariano Rivera surrendered Jim Thome's 22nd homer in the ninth but struck out two to notch his 26th save and became the third Yankee to save four straight games, joining John Wetteland (1996) and Sparky Lyle (1973).

In Boston, Tony Clark doubled home Travis Fryman with one out in the top of the 11th as the Detroit Tigers edged the Red Sox 2-1 to escape the A.L. East cellar.

Clark, 15-for-37 (.405) since breaking out of a slump, drove in both Detroit runs.

Maddux six-hits Phillies

ATLANTA (R) — Greg Maddux came within one out of a shutout and fired a six-hitter as the National League-best Atlanta Braves mowed down the Major League-worst Philadelphia Phillies 7-1 Friday.

Maddux (10-3) picked up his third straight win and tossed his third complete game in 17 starts this season. Maddux did not walk a batter and struck out eight. He threw only 89 pitches, including 71 for strikes.

"I was just trying to make the pitches," said Maddux. "My stuff was pretty good."

Rico Brogna's double in the ninth, driving in Mickey Morandini, spoiled Maddux's shutout.

Atlanta, which has won three straight and six of its last eight, has taken all five games with Philadelphia this season.

The Braves (50-28) jumped out to a 4-0 lead in the first with Fred McGriff's two-run double the big blow. Atlanta extended the lead to 6-0 in the fifth on a two-run homer by Jeff Blauser. A solo homer by Andrew Jones an inning later completed the Braves' scoring.

Garrett Stephenson (2-4) was reached for six runs and seven hits in five innings. The Phillies (23-53) have lost four straight and 12 of their last 13.

In Los Angeles, Joey Hamilton allowed two runs over seven innings and helped himself at the plate with a solo homer as the San Diego Padres beat the Dodgers 7-5 victory.

Hamilton (5-3) allowed eight hits with a walk and four strikeouts. Trevor Hoffman got the final two outs for his 15th save.

Tony Gwynn added a three-run double for the Padres.

Chan Ho Park (5-5) suffered the loss, going 5 1/3 innings and giving up four runs. He has dropped three of his last four decisions and has yielded at least three runs in each of his last five starts.

Todd Zeile hit a two-run homer and Mike Piazza added a solo shot and a two-run single for Los Angeles, which has dropped three of its last four games.

In Chicago, Kevin Foster and two relievers combined on a seven-hitter as the Cubs snapped a three-game losing streak with a 2-1 victory over the Houston Astros.

Foster (9-5) scattered seven hits and three walks over 6 2/3 innings with five strikeouts. Ramon Latis recorded the final out of the seventh and Turk Wendell pitched two scoreless innings to notch his fourth save.

The Cubs won for the second time in their last 10 games.

Chicago scored its two runs in the first, the second on a groundout by Sammy Sosa, who signed the richest contract in club history — a four-year extension believed to be worth more than \$48 million.

At Florida, Vladimir Guerrero had a career-high four hits and an RBI and four pitchers combined on a six-hitter as the Montreal Expos blanked the Marlins 2-0.

Dustin Hermanson started for the Expos and lasted only two innings before leaving with a cramp in his left leg. Marc Valdes (3-2) pitched the next three innings, allowing one hit. Dave Veres allowed three hits in the next three innings and Ugueth Urbina worked the ninth for his 14th save.

Kevin Brown (7-5) pitched well but lost. In Cincinnati, Willie Greene hit his first career grand slam in the bottom of the sixth and three pitchers combined on a five-hitter as the Reds defeated the St. Louis Cardinals 5-3 for their third win in four games.

Starter Brent Tomko (4-1) won his fourth straight decision. Jeff Shaw got the last four outs while allowing three hits for his 15th save. Alan Benes (7-7) took the loss.

In Colorado, Kirt Rueter allowed three runs over eight innings and J.T. Snow, Barry Bonds and Jose Vizcaino hit solo home runs as the San Francisco Giants beat the Rockies 6-3.

Rueter (5-2), who won his third straight, allowed six hits with no walks and two strikeouts before tiring in the ninth. Rod Beck got his league-leading 26th save.

John Thomson (2-6) took the loss.

Nefti Perez hit a two-run homer for Colorado, which has dropped four of six.

In Pittsburgh, Jason Schmidt pitched a five-hitter for his first complete game of the season and Kevin Young and Dale Sveum hit two-run homers, powering the Pirates to a 6-1 victory over the New York Mets.

Schmidt (3-4) walked two and recorded a season-high nine strikeouts and his second career complete game.

Popov set to return

SANTA CLARA (AFP) — Russian Olympic swimming champion Alexander Popov returns to competition after being stabbed last year here at the 30th Santa Clara International meet of champions.

Popov will compete on Saturday in the 50-metres freestyle and Sunday in the 100m freestyle against a field of top rivals from the United States, Japan and Australia.

Popov was stabbed last August in Moscow after a street confrontation and suffered serious injuries but has recovered and is back in training for next January's World Championships in Australia.

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2a Pass 4NT Pass
3a Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Three of A

Italian star Pietro Forquet would be high on the list of all-time great players compiled by the cognoscenti. Not so much because of his many brilliant plays, and there are certainly enough of those to fill several books, but for his ability to avoid traps on everyday hands such as the above.

The bidding auction was an advanced lesson in logic. Since North did not bid clubs on the sec-

ond round, four clubs had to be a suit in support of diamonds. Forquet tried Blackwood and subsided in game on discovering that two aces were missing.

West led the three of spades against five diamonds, and we would hazard a guess that most declarers would fail in this contract. When East shot up with the ace of spades and returned the suit, Forquet took the precaution of ruffing high. He was rewarded for his foresight when West discarded a club.

Now came the critical play. Declarer overtook the king of clubs with dummy's ace to lead a trump toward the closed hand. East's ace won and another spade was returned. It was a simple matter to ruff high again, draw trumps with the table's two honors and claim the rest of the tricks.

We might all have ruffed the spade high at trick two, but to appreciate the depth of Forquet's reasoning, see what would have happened had declarer led a low trump to the jack at trick three. East, in with the ace, would continue spades but now, after ruffing high, declarer must decide whether to play to drop the nine of trumps or to ruff the board's eight. A wrong guess and the contract goes down. Forquet's play assured the contract against any distribution except all four diamonds with East.

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The actors are on annual leave. The theatre will reopen July 2, 1997

'Gretzky to retire next year'

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — National Hockey League legend Wayne Gretzky has decided to retire after next season, a broadcast report here said Saturday.

Citing an unidentified source close to the NHL all-time leading scorer, Xtra Radio said Gretzky will announce soon, possibly within two weeks, that the 1997-1998 season will be his last.

Next season almost certainly will include a berth for Gretzky on the Canadian Olympic team as part of the six global "Dream Teams" playing at the Winter Olympics next February in Nagano, Japan.

Gretzky hinted at the time the concept was announced that playing in the landmark games that featured the first full professional lineup of teams

from the United States, Canada, Russia, Finland, Sweden and the Czech Republic would be the perfect caper to his fabled career.

This will mark the first time the NHL has shut down in mid-season to allow top professionals to represent their homelands at the Winter Games, although similar elite squads have met in World Cup and Canada Cup play.

Gretzky, 36, spent parts of eight seasons playing for the Los Angeles Kings after leading Edmonton to Stanley Cup titles in the 1980s. He played briefly for St. Louis and has one year remaining on a two-year deal with the New York Rangers.

Gretzky led the Rangers in scoring last season with 25 goals and 72 assists. He was paid \$5 million and

was among only four Rangers to play in all 82 games last season.

Gretzky shared the NHL assist lead with Mario Lemieux, the Canadian superstar who retired two months ago following a storied career troubled by back pain and severe illness. Lemieux is also seen as a possible Olympian.

Nine-time NHL Most Valuable Player Gretzky is the NHL's all-time leading scorer and his 862 goals, 1,843 assists and 2,705 points are all league records. He has won the scoring title a record 10 times.

Gretzky also holds playoff marks with 122 goals, 260 assists and 382 points.

Play resumes at Wimbledon

WIMBLEDON (Agencies)

— The rain finally stopped Saturday at Wimbledon, and a sparse centre court crowd watched Natasha Zvereva serve up the first shot in three days.

The start of play was delayed by 21 minutes before Zvereva and Elena Likhovtseva resumed their suspended match.

Likhovtseva needed just 14 minutes to complete a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Zvereva.

American 17-year-old Venus Williams, whose Wimbledon debut was delayed for five days by rain, began her match against Magdalena Grzybowska five minutes later on Court 1. Williams was brought back down to earth when she was beaten 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 in by 18-year-old Grzybowska of Poland.

Top-seed Martina Hingis made up for lost time at rain-swept Wimbledon when she beat second-round opponent Olga Barabanschikova of Belarus in straight-sets 6-2, 6-2 in just 52 minutes on the centre-court.

The 16-year-old Swiss player, whose only defeat this season came when she was beaten by Iva Majoli in the French Open final earlier this month, will now play the winner of an all-American clash between Lisa Raymond and Nicole Pietrangeli for a place in the last-16.

Javier Frana withdrew because of an ear ailment, allowing Cedric Pielone to advance to the third round.

Officials were monitoring the forecast to determine whether to play on the middle Sunday for only the second time in Wimbledon's 121-year history. Showers were possible through at least Thursday.

All England Club Chief Executive Chris Goringham had to get the approval of the local municipal authority, residents and police before deciding on middle Sunday play rather than the traditional mid-tournament break.

"Everyone with whom we have consulted has been most understanding and co-



A couple shelter under their umbrella in an empty section of the stands of the new court one as rain once more suspends play at the Wimbledon tennis championships. With the total abandonment of play due to rain yesterday, the likelihood of matches taking place on Sunday, normally the rest day, is increasing (Reuters photo)

operative," he said. "We must now wait and see what the weather will be for Sunday before we make the final decision."

Apart from Tuesday, which had largely fine weather and a full day's play, Wimbledon has been delayed by rain. Only 16 of some 60 matches were completed on the opening day, and two on Wednesday.

By the end of the Friday — the second washed out day in a row and only the second back-to-back washout since 1909 — the total number completed was 94 out of an expected 300.

There were some positive

sides to the Wimbledon washout.

The stall holders at the gift shops announced huge increases in turnover because the rain dragged spectators off the courts and into the all England shops.

— the first and so far only so-called "peoples Sunday" in 1991, when spectators came on a first-come-first-served basis with no advance ticket

sales, took some of the smoothness out of Wimbledon and was considered a major success. A second was likely to be just as fun.

But some 56,000 fans who paid up to 27 pounds (\$44) for tickets didn't see any play on the two days and some were angry that there wasn't a roof put on the new, 20 million pound (\$33 million) No. 1 court, which is being used for the first time this year.

Schumacher takes pole for French GP

MAGNY COURS, France

(AP) — Michael Schumacher took the pole position for the French Grand Prix as he led qualifying Saturday for the second consecutive Formula One race in his Ferrari.

Schumacher did a lap in 1 minute 14.548 seconds, an average of 205.236 kilometres an hour (127.555 mph). It was the 16th pole position of Schumacher's career, sixth in a Ferrari.

Sunday's race will be 72 laps of the 4.25-kilometre (2.64-mile) never circuit.

Although the qualifying was in bright, sunny conditions, rain is predicted for Sunday which will change team strategy.

Schumacher's time bettered the last year's pole position time of 1:15.989 and even approached the 1:13.864 of 1992 that Nigel Mansell set in a much more powerful car and on a faster track. Tire and suspension improvements have helped increase speeds.

Second was Heinz-Harald Frentzen in a Williams-Renault, 1:14.749 just 0.066 second ahead of Schumacher's younger brother Ralf, 1:14.755 in a Jordan-Peugeot.

For most of the session the Schumacher brothers were 1-2 before Frentzen edged



Canadian driver Jacques Villeneuve (L) talks with a pit crew member during the second days practice session at the Magny Cours circuit. The French Grand Prix will be held Sunday (Reuters photo)

between them with 15 minutes to go in the one-hour qualifying.

Fourth was Jacques Villeneuve in a Williams-Renault, 1:14.800.

Michael Schumacher has a 37-30 lead over Villeneuve in the drivers' point standings. Schumacher won the last race in Canada where Villeneuve went out after two laps.

Villeneuve had a scare in the morning when he spun and crashed into the tires just after setting the fastest time of the practice sessions.

Eddie Irvine in a Ferrari was fifth in 1:14.860 ahead of Jarno Trulli, an Italian making his first start in a Prost-Mugen-Honda.

Trulli is replacing Olivier Panis who crashed and broke both legs in the Canadian

Grand Prix. Last year's world champion, Damon Hill, came in 17th in 1:16.729.

He was last year's French Grand Prix in a Williams-Renault but things have not gone well this year in his Arrows-Yamaha. It took him seven races this season before he finished a race in his new car, coming in ninth at the Canadian Grand Prix.

Youth World Cup

Brazil meet Argentina in toughest quarterfinal today

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP)

— Brazilian coach Toninho Barroso wants his players to use their heads as much as the feet when they play holders Argentina in a World Youth football quarter-final on Sunday.

Barroso is not carried away by his team's spectacular run in the under-20 tournament, where they have scored 10 goals in each of their past two games for an overall tally of

25 from four outings.

He wants to avoid the 2-0 humiliation Argentina heaped on his team at the South American qualifiers earlier this year after Brazil had won five matches in a row.

"They became big-headed after winning those matches," Barroso said. "I don't want the team to repeat that mistake."

Brazil extracted revenge with a 3-2 win in the Have-

lenge Cup in Mexico in April and went on to win the Toulon international in May where Argentina finished third.

Although the lesson appears to have been learnt, Barroso again warned his wards not to be over-confident on Sunday.

"Argentina is always a difficult opponent. They are among the elite teams in the world. We have to be at our best to win."

Barroso believes his current squad is better than the one that played in the qualifiers.

"We have brought in some new players to add strength. I think we are mentally better prepared this time."

Strikers Adailton Martins, with 10 goals, and Alex De Souza, four, are again expected to lead the Brazilian charge in what is being touted as a virtual final.

The clash of the giants has overshadowed Sunday's other quarter-final matches between Spain and Ireland, France v Uruguay and Ghana v Japan.

But Argentine coach Jose Pekerman said "too much is being made of our match."

"This is just another game, another quarter-final. It is definitely not the final. The final will be played on July 5 between the two best teams in the tournament."

"And hopefully we will be in it. But there are two tough games to play before that."

Organisers' hopes of an Argentina-Brazil final were dashed by Australia who stunned Argentina 4-3 to top their group.

Australia lost to Japan in the second round, while Argentina overcame the shock by ousting England 2-1.

Jordan glad Pippen was not dealt

CHICAGO (AFP)

— Michael Jordan said he was pleased teammate Scottie Pippen was not traded and said he had nothing to do with the National Basketball Association team's decision.

"I'm happy that it looks like they're going to keep the team together," Jordan said. "But I will be happiest when all the contracts are signed. That way I will know for sure."

Jordan wants the club to keep Pippen, coach Phil Jackson and even controversial forward Dennis Rodman for next season when the Bulls go for their sixth NBA title in eight years.

Club officials have said they would consider not bringing back some of the talent so they could begin preparing for life after the stars are departed or retired.

To that end, the Bulls entertained an offer Tuesday from the Boston Celtics for Pippen and centre Luc Longley.

The deal was so close that Celtics officials asked Pippen's agents how much the star forward wanted for a



Michael Jordan

new pact when his contract expires next year. Reportedly the reply was between \$15 and \$20 million.

The Bulls have already found a way to bring in more money.

Ticket prices are going up next season, even though no one knows whether the top players will return. The most expensive seat rises \$25 to \$425.

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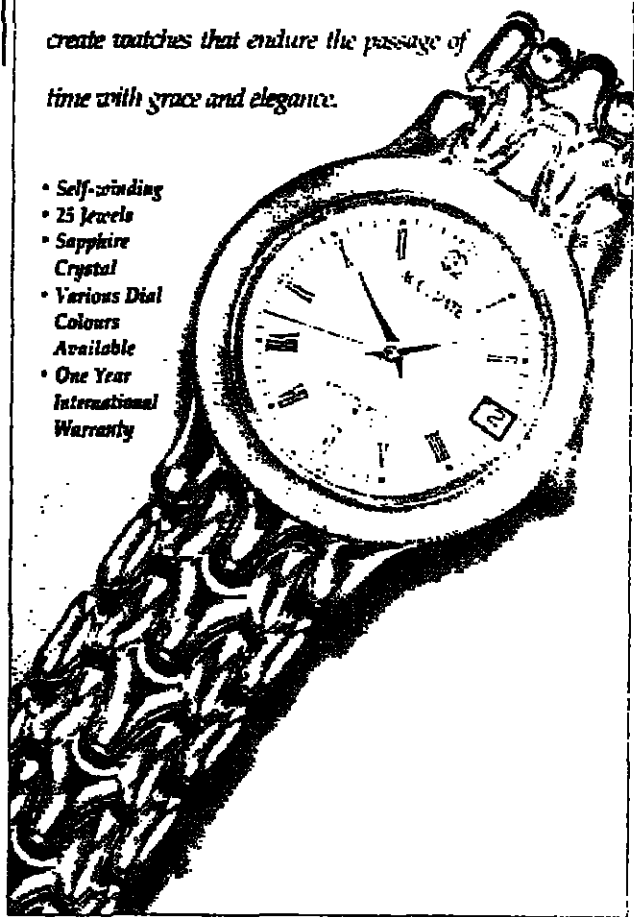
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Hardline Sharon secretly meets Palestinian official

Finance minister-to-be may meet Arafat

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Right-wing hardliner Ariel Sharon is to continue talks with the Palestinians after a secret meeting with Yasser Arafat's right-hand man, an Israeli-Arab deputy said Saturday.

Mr. Sharon, soon to be appointed Israel's finance minister, may even meet with Mr. Arafat himself, the man he regularly describes as a "terrorist," said Abdul Wahab Darawsheh of the United Arab List Party.

Mr. Darawsheh said he organised secret talks between Mr. Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) second-in-command, at Mr. Sharon's ranch in the Negev desert 10 days ago.

The two "did not solve all the (peace process) problems but just the fact that they met is very important," he told Israeli army radio.

"I believe the day will also come that Sharon will meet with Abu Ammar," Mr. Darawsheh said, using Mr. Arafat's nom de guerre.

"Each one spoke extensively of his positions, his political views and spoke with honesty and straightforwardness" in the meeting which lasted for several hours.

"They agreed that they will continue to talk and need to act to advance the peace process and reach a peace agreement between the two people," added Mr. Darawsheh, a friend of both men.

It was the first meeting between 69-year-old Mr. Sharon, currently national infrastructure minister, and a senior Palestinian official.

It came as the hawkish ex-general pushes for a seat on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's inner cabinet giving him a direct role in peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Mr. Sharon declared Wednesday that he was the "only one capable of negotiating with the Palestinians."

"I believe that given the worsening political and security situation, I must absolutely be part of the security cab-

inet," he said in a newspaper interview. "I have always been pragmatic, you just never knew it."

Mr. Sharon has made a seat in the "kitchen cabinet" a condition of his accepting the position of finance minister, vacated last week when Mr. Netanyahu forced moderate Dan Meridor out of office.

He is expected to be named to both new positions on Monday.

Mr. Netanyahu last year resisted Mr. Sharon's demand to be part of the peace negotiating team because of concern his hardline views would hamper an agreement — reached in January — on an Israeli troop pullout from most of the West Bank town of Hebron.

Mr. Sharon is an outspoken opponent of the Oslo peace accords with the Palestinians and a champion of expanding Jewish settlements, the issue at the heart of the current crisis in the peace process.

Foreign Minister David Levy, a moderate member of Mr. Netanyahu's rightwing

government, originally threatened to resign if Mr. Sharon was handed a role in negotiations over fear he would aggravate the crisis.

However, Mr. Levy dropped his opposition Friday after receiving assurances from Mr. Netanyahu he would remain officially in charge of the negotiations.

Another cabinet member, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, called on Mr. Sharon Friday to shake Mr. Arafat's hand to "show the evolution in mentalities."

"I am sure Sharon would click with" the Palestinians, Mr. Kahalani said.

The Palestinians pulled out of peace negotiations in March after Israel began construction on a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians want as the capital of a future state.

Mr. Abbas tried to resign from his position as top Palestinian negotiator as a sign of his frustration at the time but was refused by Mr. Arafat.

Museveni demands Sudan release of abducted girls before PoW swap

KAMPALA (AFP) — Uganda will not release 114 Sudanese prisoners of war (PoWs) it is holding until 21 schoolgirls abducted last year by rebels in northern Uganda are set free, President Yoweri Museveni has said.

"No girls, no prisoners," Mr. Museveni told a press conference at state lodge here on Friday evening, but did not comment on the fate of two Ugandan soldiers also being held by the Sudanese government in Khartoum.

Mr. Museveni said the Sudanese government had failed to return the schoolgirls abducted in October last year from St. Mary's School, Aboke, in northern Uganda's Lira district by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels.

"The Sudan government is playing tricks on us. This (failure to produce the girls) answers those who think we can engage in dialogue with

Sudan," Mr. Museveni declared at the press conference.

The Ugandan government alleges that the LRA, which is seeking to overthrow Mr. Museveni's government and put in its place an administration based on the biblical Ten Commandments, have been operating out of bases in southern Sudan since for the past 10 years.

A four-member team, led by head of the External Security Organisation David Pulkol and deputy headmistress of St. Mary's school, Sister Fesera Rachelle, returned to Uganda empty handed on Thursday from the southern Sudanese regional capital Juba, where they had gone to negotiate the release of the girls.

The LRA, whose main method of recruitment is abduction, raided the school last October and marched 139 schoolgirls into the

bush. Sister Rachelle took chase and managed to negotiate the release of 109 of them.

One girl was later reported to have drowned, while eight others escaped from their captors.

Uganda claims that the 114 Sudanese soldiers were captured when they tried to enter Uganda with the LRA rebels, a claim the soldiers have denied, while Sudan also captured two Ugandan soldiers under similar circumstances.

The Sudanese PoWs were captured on the same day that the LRA's main base at Aru in southern Sudan was destroyed in a victory claimed by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) rebels, who have been battling Khartoum forces since 1983 to end domination of the mainly animist and Christian southern Sudan by the Arabised, Muslim north.

Saudi suspect links Iran to attacks

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Saudi prisoner recently deported from Canada to the United States has implicated at least one top Iranian official in planned attacks on U.S. targets, the Washington Post reported Saturday.

Abdul Rahim Sayegh told U.S. law enforcement officials that a senior Iranian intelligence officer named Ahmad Sherif was the main proponent of a different bombing plot in 1995 that never was carried out, the post reported.

U.S. intelligence officials believe the June 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers apartment complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia was a variation on this earlier plot.

Sayegh's remarks support a theory held by many in the U.S. intelligence community that Iran was behind the Khobar Towers attack.



WHERE DID THE JOURNALIST GO? Members of the organisation Reporters Without Borders, stick posters of Iranian dissident writer Faraj Sarkouhi on the windows of 'La Maison de l'Iran' in Paris Friday. Sarkouhi, 49, who in October 1994 was among 134 writers and journalists who signed a petition for more freedom of expression in Iran, disappeared last November (AFP photo)

Hong Kong's future chief lays down law

HONG KONG (R) — Future Hong Kong chief executive, Tung Chee-Hwa, insisted Saturday that Chinese troops and armour sweeping in just after Britain's handover next week could not move against the local population without his order.

"They will not, they cannot," he said in an interview with the U.S. television network NBC.

As the colonial legislature closed its doors with the declaration "The king is dead, long live the king," Mr. Tung sought to calm anxieties sparked by news that 4,000 People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops would move into Hong Kong just six hours after China takes over the territory at midnight Monday.

"I think the PLA presence in Hong Kong is a symbol of sovereignty. It is necessary to show that symbol of sovereignty," he told interviewer Tom Brokaw.

He praised the PLA as "a very well-disciplined people, a very well-disciplined army" and added that once Hong Kong people got to know them "they will be part of our community."

International reaction has been muted to the planned arrival of the soldiers, spearheaded by a column of 21 armoured cars and backed by 400 other vehicles, six helicopters and a number of warships.

But the prospect of armoured vehicles rumbling through the streets of Hong Kong, igniting painful memories of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, sparked outrage among democracy activists in Hong Kong.

Outgoing Governor Chris Patten blasted the move as "a most appalling signal," not because China did have the right to post troops to the territory, but because of the timing of the deployment and the method.

The South China Morning Post quoted one military analyst as saying China might use the occasion to unveil its new anti-riot "internal security vehicle," possibly mounted with machine guns.

There was a chance the PLA might roll out its even more lethal six-wheel, all-terrain vehicle, also boasting infrared vision, Paul Beaver of Jane's Defence Information Group, the respected British publication, was quoted as saying.

But while pro-democracy leaders condemned what they saw as PLA bullying, Hong Kong villagers along the border were planning to welcome the troops with flowers and a metal plaque saying "an army with power and civilisation."

At the end of a marathon 23-hour session of the Legislative Council, to be replaced by a Beijing-picked assembly, its president, Andrew Wong declared: "The king is dead, long live the king."

"Life must go on in Hong Kong and it will," he said later.

Mr. Wong is one of 33 members of the 60-seat council who will join a provisional legislature that takes over when Hong Kong formally reverts to China, ending 156 years of colonial rule.

In his interview with NBC, Mr. Tung took a swipe at pro-democracy figures who plan

to disrupt the investiture of the new legislature with protests. Nobody could spoil the party, he said, laughing.

"If anybody feels they can achieve martyrdom they will be very disappointed," he said, without mentioning Martin Lee, the head of the democratic party planning the protest who is often accused by critics of having a martyr complex.

"People really must behave themselves in accordance with the law," Mr. Tung said. Barely disguised friction between Mr. Patten's outgoing administration and Mr. Tung's incoming government threatened to spill into the end-of-empire party that Britain is throwing at sunset on the waterfront of Victoria Harbour.

Mr. Tung's office said he may have to miss the Hollywood-style extravaganza, complete with dragon dances, massed choirs and bagpipers — and a farewell speech by Mr. Patten — to greet arriving Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Li Peng.

But Mr. Tung's advisers portrayed the issue as a scheduling problem, not a snub.

The main ceremony at midnight features Britain's heir to the throne Prince Charles formally handing over control of Hong Kong to President Jiang.

The Royal Navy, which claimed Hong Kong for Britain in the Opium wars, won the right to pull down the flag on the colony. The honour of lowering the Union Jack will go to operation mechanic Nick Tarrant of the ship HMS Chatham.

British charity to offer lunch-hour abortion to help working women

LONDON (R) — Critics call it barbaric, grotesque and horrific but a British charity said on Saturday it would go ahead with plans to offer working women abortions in their lunch break.

The charity, Marie Stopes International — named after an early British champion of birth control — said it would launch the operation at clinics in London and in Leeds and Manchester to the north next month.

"Women don't leave their bodies from the state or even from the church. They own them themselves and, if under the 1967 Abortion Act, they have an unwanted pregnancy...They have a right to the best service possible," Dr. Tim Black, chief executive of the charity, told BBC radio.

He said the abortions would be offered to women who are less than 12 weeks pregnant as "a new seamless service without medical drama or moral censure."

Dr. Black said three decades had passed since the legalisation of abortion and there was no need to make women suffer unduly or feel guilty for terminating a pregnancy in today's society.

"Why, 30 years later, is there this preoccupation of making women have to climb over fences and do back-flips and censure them, if they want to have

an abortion and it conforms to the terms of the 1967 Abortion Act?"

Yet critics say the procedure, carried out under local anaesthetic in three to four minutes, trivialises abortion and offers inadequate support for the women involved.

"We are taking now about making abortion available rather like something you buy over the counter and that means people do not have a chance to consider seriously what they are doing," said a spokesman

for the Catholic Bishops' Conference.

"This would be the ultimate in a fast economy, you have fast food and now you can have a fast abortion," said Josephine Quintavalle of the anti-abortion group Life. "I don't think a child's life should be disposed of in a lunch-hour."

The new "walk-in-walk-out" operation will be performed in a treatment chair and patients will be taken to a recovery room for a snack and a drink. Abortions are usually performed under a

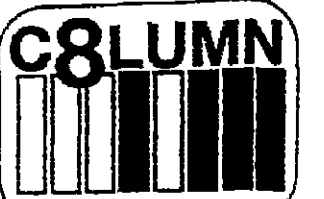
general anaesthetic with follow-up surveillance in hospital.

Health Minister Tessa Jowell has said she welcomes any medical advance that reduces "the pain and trauma" of abortion but has voiced fears about trivialising a decision that proves agonising for most women.

About 160,000 abortions were carried out last year in Britain, which has largely avoided the divisive and violent debate over a woman's right to choose seen in the United States.



ABORTION IN TEN MINUTES AT LUNCHTIME: Helen Axy, U.K. director of women's health charity, Marie Stopes International, in the treatment room of their London headquarters Saturday, after the announcement of plans to offer a ten-minute abortion service to fit in with working women's lives (Reuters photo)



First lady says she wants to emigrate after TV interview

TEL AVIV (AP) — Sarah Netanyahu was so upset about personal questions she was asked during a TV interview that she was ready to leave the country, a newspaper said Friday. Midway through the interview, the wife of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was asked whether she was using her husband's admitted infidelity as leverage to influence his decisions. At that point, she reportedly broke off the taping and demanded that portions not be aired, including scathing remarks about politicians; one of her predecessors and a woman cabinet minister. "After such an interview and such questions I feel like packing up and leaving the country," Netanyahu said after the interview, according to the daily Yediot Achronot. "She is a depraved woman," Sara Netanyahu said of image consultant Ruth Bar, who reportedly had an affair with prime minister. "She came on to my husband. You show me one married man who would not go along."

Lack of water grounds for leaving husband — Egyptian court

CAIRO (AFP) — A Cairo court ruled in favour of a woman who left her husband because there was no running water in the marital home, the daily Akhbar Al-Yom reported Saturday. The appeals court overturned an earlier verdict ordering the wife, who was not identified, to go back to her husband. The court said a house without running water was not "safe" for a woman and that the marital home should be equipped with all public services.

Iranian police close down dating agency, arrest boss

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian authorities shut down a dating agency and ordered its boss flogged for "sexual corruption," the Kayhan newspaper reported Saturday. The club, called "Kianouche," organised meetings between young girls and foreign men, the paper said. It said the 31-year-old boss, Shahrouz Ghafouri, was brought before a "special court" and sentenced to 275 lashes of the whip and a "long prison sentence." Khayyan said 700 high school students joined the club and their names were listed in a catalogue to pass on to 20 similar agencies abroad. Ghafouri "put on pornographic shows for his friends," it added. Sex outside marriage is banned in Iran, where any mixing of men and women who are not related is frowned on.

California teenager given 112-year prison term

VISTA, California (R) — A teenager who murdered his parents, grandparents and sister was sentenced Friday to 112 years in prison, virtually assuring he will spend the rest of his life behind bars. Joshua Jenkins, 17, was accused of bludgeoning his father to death on February 16, 1996, then turning on his mother and grandparents, stabbing them repeatedly to make sure they were dead. The next day he drove with his 10-year-old sister to buy an axe and used it to kill her after they returned home. Jenkins pleaded guilty to the murders, but a trial was held to determine his sanity. While his attorneys argued that Jenkins suffered from schizophrenia, the prosecution argued that he was angry at his parents for placing him in a school for troubled youths. Last month a jury found Jenkins legally sane in four of the killings but deadlocked on his father's murder. Under the terms of Friday's sentence, he could be eligible for parole after his 100th birthday.

Indonesian president says no recognition of Jewish state until disputes settled

JAKARTA (AP) — President Suharto pledged to Syria's visiting prime minister on Friday that Indonesia will not establish diplomatic ties with Israel until it gives up all occupied Arab lands.

The remarks echoed Mr. Suharto's comments Thursday night at a state banquet for Mahmoud Zoubi, whose five-day visit is the first by a senior Syrian official.

"Indonesia will never con-

sider having diplomatic relations with Israel unless the occupied Syrian territory (the Golan Heights) and all other Arab lands are returned to their original owners in the Arab countries," a top minister quoted Mr. Suharto as saying in a meeting with Mr. Zoubi.

Murdiono, minister at the state secretariat, said that during the talks Mr. Suharto expressed appreciation for the support Syria had given to Indonesia's annexation of

East Timor in 1976.

The United Nations does not recognise the annexation, which followed Indonesia's invasion of the predominantly Roman Catholic Portuguese colony in 1975.

In the speech Thursday night, Mr. Suharto said Israel should return the occupied Golan Heights to Syria and withdraw from southern Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, newspapers reported Friday.